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THE DRAMA

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE



Editors

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE

CHARLES HUBBARD SERGEL

No. 4

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THE DRAMA

A Quarterly Review of Dramatic Literature

No. 4

November

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EMILE AUGIER.

I.



PROFESSOR Brander Matthews, in "The French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century," wrote what we cannot but believe to be his most delightful and serviceable book. Dipping into it from time to time since the first careful reading, I for one have never found myself disappointed; so that in furnishing here a few suggestions for the study of Emile Augier (1820-1889), by way of introducing the following efforts at translation of one of his masterpieces, nothing better could probably be done for the average reader than to remind him of the fifth chapter of the above mentioned book, which, while less epigrammatic and brilliant than its fellows on Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas *filis* respectively, appears to be written *con amore* and has about it something of an indescribable persuasiveness, due perhaps to the very sobriety of its enthusiasm.

There is something about Emile Augier that especially attracts the Anglo-Saxon, who somehow is

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wont to form his conception of the Frenchman in spite of all his better knowledge as a composite photograph of the dancing master, the chef, and the unmentionable novel. That the gamut of French thought and feeling runs from Rabelais to Calvin is something that he is most likely and willing to forget. All seriousness, in his opinion, left France with the Huguenots, who brought the cloth industry to England and a sort of "Poor Richard philosophy" to South Carolina. But thrift, domestic virtue and philosophical seriousness were not altogether drained from France by that unfortunate blood letting. In our own days Beaudelaire and Verlaine on the one hand, LeConte de Lisle and Sully Prudhomme on the other hand, point to the same contrast, only one term of which is supposed by the self-righteous Anglo-Saxon to be Frenchy and French. Now Emile Augier belongs to the serious wing of the French eagle—for at the time of his flourishing the eagle of imperial glory was still beating her wings, if for the second time, and Anglo-Saxons recognize in him a long lost brother, and fancy he must be also descended on a collateral line from the Lost Ten Tribes! To be sure, there cling to him some "Frenchy" habits, the inevitable consequence of unfortunate early associations; but how he does cherish the home, personal integrity and probity, feminine virtue and all the other celestial glories that invariably adorn the middle class heaven! Were it only that Emile Augier justified himself immediately to Anglo-Saxon eyes, as an apologete for bourgeois excellence, we should not think it worth our while to print any of his plays in translation; but the truth is that the work of this sterling patriot, honest and honorable man, is noteworthy from more than one point of view. First, he has his place in the development of European

Drama as a forerunner of Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann and the rest of the moderns. Secondly, he endeavored to produce a most difficult kind of drama, the satiric drama, in which his only successful compeers are Ben Jonson and the younger Ibsen in his verse plays. Finally, as having to all intents and purposes put sociology on the stage for the first time, Augier interests us as exhibiting the special vices of a democratic society and of a democratic government, so that all the while as one reads his best work, one wonders if he could have written, without a special eye to American affairs during the last ten years. The régime of graft and the accepted sneer of the "low-brow" at the "high-brow" that runs unctuously from soul to soul, absolving us from all pecuniarily unprofitable intellectual endeavor or moral worth; the subsidized or rather purchased press; the representative of the people directly or indirectly in the pay of private interests; these flagrant vices of the sixties in France are not wholly unfamiliar to us, although our types of them may harbor certain wholesome vulgarities about them which indicate that they are not a final state of the body politic and the social order, and will yield to mild treatment like the measles. Ours, at least we flatter ourselves, is no cancer needing the surgical treatment of a Franco-Prussian War; and our man on horseback will be content with a grape-vine swing in the South, with skeeing in the Northwest, and hunting for the National Zoo. Altogether we are a fortunate people whose acutest symptoms of disease turn out upon careful diagnosis to be nothing more than growing pains or colic. Hence it is that the American will enjoy the "Augier exhibit" of French Decadence, social and political; the qualm of conscience will be invariably succeeded by the abdominal

chuckle, which proverbially helps digestion. Who then should feel any compunction at the solid, sober and dignified and often lofty work of Emile Augier? A Hebrew Prophet, domesticated in Paris, and fulminating with academic good taste against the sins which our neighbors are committing—unfeloniously, however, in this pardonable period of transition? A pinch of “graft,” a grain of canniness, a suspicion of “buncum,”—what be these dissolved in the savory economic sauce so liberally poured over our American dish of prosperity? Vive la France! and Emile Augier (being well dead), and our own private and public Plutosnocracy!

II.

The place of Emile Augier in the development of the modern French Drama may be variously assigned, if it be a matter to be decided solely by chronological priority, for the careers of *Scribe*, *Sardou*, *Dumas fils*, and *Augier* overlap. We shall attempt only a sketch of the logical order. The reader must remember that there were, at least, two Augiers, and two *Dumas fils*, so that each might be claimed as the predecessor of the other,—according to the point of view taken toward their respective works. In 1827 there took place in Paris a brilliant series of Shaksperian performances by the best known actors of the English stage. Whether this brilliant series of performances was a symptom or a cause, or both, we will not stop to discuss; suffice it to record the fact. In 1829 appeared the æsthetically revolutionary “*Henri III*” of the elder *Dumas*, and in 1830 the “*Hernani*” of *Victor Hugo*. With these two works began the career of the Romantic Drama. Since the “*Cid*” of *Corneille* there had not

been so popular a success in the region of stage poetry, and the ferocious hostility which "Hernani" elicited was not merely a proof of its power, but also of the fact that the times were ripe for the appearance of the revolutionary spirit on the French stage, forty years after the political outburst. So conservative was and is the theatre of France!

Now, the cost of the hampering unities should never be mentioned without also alluding to the net gain. The narrow limits set to the action of the French play resulted in an arbitrary, sometimes cruel—but also, at least with masterpieces—a beneficent and almost miraculous simplification. For success the master needed far greater expertness. The conventions being obtrusive had to be subtler for toleration. The dramatist became indeed a theatrical prestidigitator, while remaining all the time a poet, and his audience was slowly trained to a full appreciation of the difficulties surmounted or evaded by the playwright's skill. The revolution in Romantic Drama was wrought in the name of artistic liberty and Shakspeare as its hero; witness Hugo's magniloquent and bellicose introduction to "Cromwell." One cannot but suspect, however, that the object was not liberty, but a variety of interest; and hitherto excluded theatrical effects doubtless derived from popular melodrama,—in the case of Hugo, under the cloak of the grand style.

For in the series of plays of the elder Dumas (1803-1870) we notice especially high-wrought passion, intrigue, breathless haste, and extreme situations; in the far more important series of Hugo's plays, running through the thirties and early forties, we notice again passion, eloquence, verse splendors in descriptive and narrative digressions, and spectacular solutions of dramatic problems,—the *coup*

de theatre uncannily superimposed upon the purple patch! But for all the exotic interest and the lack of emotional restraint, we cannot but notice that the French habit, originally induced doubtless because of the pitiless three unities, continues undisturbed; namely, the display of a preconceived character rather than the development of a progressively self-conceiving character; character as a definite datum, a precipitation, a residuum, a death mask, not character as a problem, a psychological experiment, a vital surprise, an individual achievement. The French Drama gave the cross section, the English Drama at its best a long section of some piece of life; and the French manner had doubtless its justifications in after-thought, but its crying necessity is to be found in the three unities. Now, the continuance of the French manner, in itself so much less vitally interesting, after the repeal of the said unities, was doubtless a matter of classic momentum. The result, at all events, of the Romantic revolution was a revival of literary interest with exotic material; and while forfeiting the close psychology of Racine and Molière, losing the faithful contact with the rational and the abiding in human nature, it gratified liberally the natural appetite for sensation.

The Romantic Drama was not Shaksperian then in essence. The product of the movement is as like Shakspeare's work as Voltaire's, and Hugo's views of Shakspeare resemble the true Shakspeare. There must come the inevitable reaction to sanity. Eugene Scribe (1791-1861) presenting commonplace human nature conventionalized; master of intrigue, weaving his threads in and out in an obvious pattern; passing from situation to situation as though telling the beads of his rosary, tied together by the one thread of—the pious desire to please! Victorien

Sardou (1831-1908), the master of carpentry and tinsel, lord of the setting, whose muse was the scintillating and exquisitely disposed *tableau vivant*. Note, for instance, what in his hands becomes of Shakspeare's "Antony and Cleopatra," and sneer if you choose; yet you will have to admit that the property man at length has come into his own, and wears his peculiar halo, to which he doubtless has his excellent democratic right (much to the financial profit, however, be it observed, of the playwright). Alexandre Dumas *fils* (1824-1895), was the great discoverer for all Europe of the modern individual upon the stage. Beginning with "La Dame aux Camélias" and ending with "M. Alphonse" ('73), his literally splendid series of stage homilies were delivered, sometimes over-sentimental, sometimes acrimonious, sometimes preposterously logical, but always interesting, always striving after truth of portraiture and truth of doctrine, over-emphasizing the generally slurred elements, sometimes marring his work altogether by the desire to give prominence to what is usually unmentioned because of a middle class taboo, nevertheless with all his faults and shortcomings Alexandre Dumas *fils* did demonstrate the value of putting upon the stage real men and women who, while intelligible as types, could be convincing as individuals. So far we may summarize what has been said of the Modern French Drama in the four words: passion, situation, tableaux, and problems; or eloquence, ingenuity, sumptuousness, and personality.

Now, what was the specific contribution of Emile Augier (1820-89)? Briefly put, after considerable hesitation, the prophet in Augier awoke and exhibited in his works social problems through more or less sketchily realized persons (sometimes quite

human, sometimes conventional and merely typical, sometimes both for awhile, occasionally both throughout). His movement is hesitating from personage to personage, from the lesser comedy of manners towards the dramatic satire in the grand style.

CHRONOLOGY OF AUGIER'S PLAYS:

- 1844. *La Cigüe*. (Little classical comedy).
- *1845. *Un Homme de Bien*. (Glorification of the husband and the home).
- 1848. *L'Aventurière*. (Defense of the home against the moral "free lance").
- *1849. *Gabrielle*. (The Home again).
- 1850. *Le joueur de Flûte*.
- 1852. *Diane*.
- 1853. *La Pierre de Touche*.
- 1853. *Philiberte*.
- *1855. *Le Mariage d'Olympe*. (Defense of the Home).
- ** *Le Gendre de M. Poirier*. (Relations of pedigree and industrial fortune). ✕
Ceinture Dorée.
- 1858. *La jeunesse*.
- ***1858. *Les Lionnes Pauvres*. (Containing *Scraphine*).
- 1859. *Un Beau Mariage*.
- ***1861. *Les Effrontés*. (Containing *Vermouillet* and *Giboyer*). ✕
- ***1862. *Le fils de Giboyer*.
- 1864. *Le Maître Guérin*. (The Country Lawyer).
- ***1866. *La Contagion*.
- **1868. *Paul Forestier*. (The Artist).
- ***1869. *Lions et Renards*. (Containing *D'Estrigaud*).
Le Postscriptum.
- 1873. *Jean de Thommeray*.
- *1876. *Mademoiselle Caverlet*. (The question of divorce).
- *1878. *Le Fourchambault*.

III.

The problem of the satiric drama in which Augier more especially distinguished himself constitutes an almost insoluble æsthetic problem. Shakspeare's suc-

cess in the form is at least open to question, e. g., with the tragic end in "Timon of Athens;" with the comic solution in "All's Well that Ends Well." For the drama requires sympathy on the part of the audience with its chief figures, whereas satire requires an antipathetic aloofness from them. The conflicting requirements of the form, then, and the mood may be compromised as follows: The playwright may offer the satire of the major characters, preserving our sympathy towards the minor characters. The result is likely to be an ill-constructed drama, with the center of gravity out of the base of the structure; the theatrical interest, that is to say, alien to the figures most prominent in the dramatic work. Or the playwright may instead elect to put us in affectionate relations with his chief figures, expending his satirical genius on the minor characters. The result clearly is a drama with satirical atmosphere like Daudet's "Froment jeune et Risler aîné." An absolute success in this genre would necessarily require, it would seem, an intermittent current of satire, an alternation of interest, some kind of oscillation from emotional pole to intellectual pole. Perhaps, however, success in the satiric drama might be compassed by making the satirized chief person relatively sympathetic as compared to an odious environment, the Nietzschean distinction being sharply drawn between *schlecht*, low, base, vile, and *böse*, wicked, bad, dangerous. In this fashion Ben Jonson would seem to have absolutely solved the problem of the satiric drama in his "Volpone" (The Fox), which displays the cynic self-tricked, antipathetic to our moral sense, and yet relatively sympathetic when contrasted with the base knaves and fools, his parasites and his dupes. In modern times the satiric drama has witnessed Ibsen's theatrically doubtful

successes of "Peer Gynt" (1867) and "The Wild Duck" (1884).

Now it cannot be said that Emile Augier completely succeeded in compromising to our satisfaction the opposing demands of æsthetic form and poetic mood; but whoever will consider that great series of plays, in spirit so earnest and terrible, in matter often so conventional, will have to admit that the faults being granted, there remains for the lover of dramatic literature a great achievement in "Les Effrontés," "Le Fils de Giboyer," and "La Contagion," regarded as a trilogy, which may be expanded to a "pentology" by the inclusion of "Les Lionnes Pauvres" as the introduction, and "Les Leons et Renards" as a dramatic epilogue.

IV.

Roughly speaking, the career of Emile Augier is the record of a bourgeois moralist's development into a national prophet. "Un Homme de Bien" ('45) and "Gabrielle" ('49) give us the pro and con for the bourgeois ideal. In the first of these two we are shown M. Feline, the righteous man, distinctly self-righteous, and never without an excellent selfish motive for his righteousness. The pitiless exposure of the *soi disant* moral man's cant must have been wholesome. Why is he moral? Clearly for safety's sake and ease. "The masque of Don Juan does not seem to fit and become every brow. One must have much wit for that rôle, and in fact it is much less arduous to play the part of the honest man." And what is his spiritual reward? His is the undoubted right to judge, and to condemn! "The right to feel myself and declare myself honest; and I wager nobody will have payed a higher price than I

for the precious right of crying 'stop thief' at the heels of the rascal." But the right to judge and condemn is not the only reward, for our hero agrees with some reluctance that it is a matter of extreme pride to him, and promises the ulterior delight of indulging at leisure in cheerful self-admiration. Poor Rose is taken in by M. Feline's display of good nature, and by his parade of magnanimous sentiment: "How could I have despised this honest and good man?" But indeed, it was good for her to be deluded; better than to see too clearly through his disguise.

The other side of this unsympathetic portraiture of the bourgeois was furnished us in "Gabrielle," in which appeared the much ridiculed line: "O head of the family, O poet, how I love thee!" Yet, laugh as one may at this extraordinary lyrical outburst torn bleeding from its context, the fact remains, as Augier shows, that the poetry of the home is all the poetry possible to the ordinary man. Nor is the poetry of vagabondage truly any commoner. Stephane, who tries to break up his friend Julien's home, is not really a better lover or a more romantic person than her husband; he only occupies the easier rôle from the point of view of immediate theatrical effect. Julien's awakening to his unconscious neglect of his wife (absorbed as he had been in making material provision for her) and his insistence that "they forgive each other all around"—all this, however easily parodied, does not fail to make an impression on the honest spectator's mind and heart.

Augier's next preachment may be said to appear in "L'Aventurière" ('48) and "Le Mariage D'Olympe" ('55). Here he enlarges on the fact that the romantic sympathy is accorded to the sinner. Somehow or other the benefit of the doubt is not

granted, as it should be, to those whose position is regular. There is the hypocrisy of morality; but so is there also the hypocrisy of rebellion against society. The doctrine is driven home, perhaps somewhat cruelly, by Augier. Though the adventuress is not incapable of repentance, and though her repentance should be considered sincere until proved otherwise,—nevertheless she cannot be taken back into the bosom of outraged society as though nothing had occurred. She must earn her virtue; acceptance must not come to her as a free gift, for only as an expensive purchase will she prize her virtue at its true worth. The trial as by fire of adversity is what she needs. In an easy prosperity she will but lapse again.

In “*Le Gendre de M. Poirier*” (’55) we are given a veritable masterpiece,—Molière’s “*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*” brought down to date; and the shafts of wit, hitting the aristocracy quite as often as the bourgeoisie. M. Poirier himself is a delicious personage, and should be known and not read about. His business sense identified with common sense, and claiming for itself a kind of divine sanction,—a sort of mystic mathematic afflatus—is only equaled by his profound contempt for art and artists. His honesty is great, but not as great as his honest fear of being cheated. No honest man will allow a fellow man to be dishonest at his personal expense! His love of abstract honesty is too great to permit his own honesty to stand in the way of imparting to another’s virtue! M. Poirier,—why not translate it “*Pear-tree*” while one is at it—bears the delicious fruit of unselfishness; but notice that it is unselfishness of so high an order that it succeeds in being selfish also at the same time. For should one not show good business tact in one’s friendship and one’s philan-

thropy, and in the sacred ties and devotions of the family? The nobility come in for wholesome scorn, for their theory of life is gilded idleness, and he for one, M. Poirier, will not regild their idleness where the base metal shows. Again and again he repeats his charges against the nobility, always to be overcome by a sneaking sense of their actual superiority, and speculating in secret as to the money value of it all! Why not invest in a pedigree for one's daughter, if the thing somehow has a market price? His daughter, who loves the ne'er-do-well Gaston, and Gaston himself the impecunious nobleman, who believes in always showing one's nobility by giving more than the law requires, and making up for it by giving very much less on other occasions, — who scorning money, sells himself for money, deems it ridiculous to be in love with one's wife (and yet — and yet . . . Oh, this deceitful heart of ours!) . . . surely this is all excellent matter for delicious laughter!

And the text to the sermon is not lacking in seriousness. Bourgeois and noblemen each affect to despise what they do not themselves have, and they are most graciously convicted by the dramatist of their respective limitations, and of their dire need, therefore, of each other's good qualities possessed at least by friendly proxy.

In "*La Ceinture Dorée*" ('55) and "*Un Beau Mariage*" ('59) the economic relations of the French conception of marriage are pointedly discussed, but the plays naturally appeal less to the foreign reader.

Now follows at length that great and terrible series, "*Les Lionnes Pauvres*" ('58), "*Les Efrontés*" ('61), "*Le Fils de Giboyer*" ('62), in which lust of wealth is shown to be the corrupter of society; and "*La Contagion*" ('66) and "*Les Leons et*

Renards" ('69), in which the hideous cynicism is presented to us, which derives from the plutocratic ideal, such as will, if left to itself, utterly destroy society. Creations like Séraphine, Vermouillet, Giboyer and d'Estrigaud are in themselves sufficient witness to the genius of Augier. We shudder when we think of them, and yet it is rare that we are not made to understand all, and therefore pardon all, before we reach the end of any play.

V.

The situation of "*Les Effrontés*" ('61) is simple. M. Charrier is a respectable banker, whose fortune is accumulating to buy a career for his son Henri, and a fine marriage for his daughter Clemence. He failed once, many years back, and there are outstanding outlawed debts, of which nobody knows except Vermouillet, a speculative bankrupt, who scorns all honest folk, and buys a newspaper with which to exploit Charrier's dishonorable secret and, if possible, obtain his daughter in marriage.

We meet two newspaper men—Sergine, the honest editor, and Giboyer, the hired pen, disillusioned, cynical, at bottom hating himself for his venality, but feigning a sinister indifference. When Vermouillet has bought the paper, Sergine resigns his post as editor. "When one cannot drive out from the Temple those who buy and sell in it then—one gets out oneself." To which Giboyer retorts: "Heavens, he is honest! I wonder what he is paid for the pose?" In the end, Charrier acknowledges his outlawed debts, thus destroying the power of the blackmailer, in order to keep the respect of his son, Henri, who will join the army, since, strange to

say, poor, unsophisticated youth, he prefers poverty to his father's dishonor.

Such is our introduction into that venal world of the Second Napoleon. Clearly its ideal is "Wealth Without Work." Worldly success is the *summum bonum*. "How can one help feeling a certain respect for the owners of so many beautiful things? Riches are a kind of power, whose sacramental sign is luxury" ("La Contagion"). "The world does not bow before the people it esteems, but rather before those it envies. Riches or notoriety, these are for the world everything" ("La Contagion"). Now, great wealth cannot be had, of course, without work. Therefore the wise man will exploit the workers, or those who are already possessed of wealth and are losing their grip of it; or, last and best of all, exploit the Government, which means has the advantage, besides, of bringing to the exploiter the rewards of patriotism.] Now, to work the worker is hard work; therefore the truly wise will exclude that difficult method of "getting on." He will settle down to exploiting the idle wealthy by shameful service, by pandering or flattery; or he will blackmail them, being cognizant of their secret vice. Similarly, the wise man will become a political parasite; malfeasance in office on the part of the powerful, which is carefully veiled politically and socially, may be delicately looked into, lifting, on the sly, a corner of the snow-white coverlet of respectability. If one's mood be more courageous, one may buy iniquitous special privileges, taxing the public for their good. Or one may wriggle through the loopholes in the laws, carefully provided by hired legal talent of the first order, at the season when the song of the lobbyist is in the land. Of course, one is apt to think; and he who is "to get on" must not think

overmuch,—at least not along certain old-fashioned lines. So commercial integrity is a joke, and civic virtue a stuffed specimen of an extinct species at the museum. As for public opinion (which is, of course, the voice of God), it can be manufactured, if one discreetly invests. The majority of the stock of all the principal newspapers can be held by a sort of loose association of rogues (understood, of course, to be successful gentlemen of high standing), who exchange favors (in which, to be sure, money is no consideration), and then the miracle always happens: the voice of God thunders, it “booms” and “boosts,” “slams” and “lambasts,” coos and purrs, marvelously to order,—nay, rather as if to order,—for of course it is the spontaneous, mystical, esoteric voice of God, which in turn creates that external, exoteric, obvious, irresistible voice of God,—Public Opinion!

But is there no honest remnant by way of public opinion? Certainly. There are those who play the game and understand not the rules; who merely watch the play of the “big fellows,” and do likewise. So, also, in the matters of thought and opinion, honest little folk and honest little journals are beyond dispute constitutionally honest; but they somehow catch the infection, and honestly side with the rogues, who are so eminently respectable, and they honestly quote their “great contemporaries,” who are so notably competent in the gathering of news and the forming of judicious opinions! Besides, most hitherto honest men are cautious how they offend the unexposed rogue. Honest men rarely help, and rogues often hinder, the private devices of honest men. Besides, who knows but that we shall have our turn at the swag? Hence, “everybody” is covertly with the exploiters of the public purse, as each ex-

pects vaguely that his opportunity may come along soon,—or that of his uncle or his cousin or brother-in-law,—and it's all in the family, don't you know?

In such a society, everything is for sale,—friendship, love, religion,—not to mention glory and social standing! And is there any hope for such a society? Yes, and, what is more, the hopes are two: There is the comic hope, and there is the tragic hope. The comic hope is,—thoroughgoing, excoriating ridicule, tempered with enough good humor and kindness to conciliate those in whom some little honesty survives. To this kindlier hope Emile Augier makes his brave appeal. But there is another, to which appeal must be made in event of failure. When comedy on the boards cannot preach effectively, then tragedy must stalk the streets and public squares. “Calamity! calamity!” to reënthrone the hero, necessitating courageous action, without a doubt, without discussion. As early as “*Le Gendre de M. Poirier*” (’55), Augier writes these words: “It is rest to the soul, to get one's life ordered ahead without possible discussion, or room for regret.” (The speaker alludes to military discipline.) “Only from this tyrannical scheduling of life can you derive a sincerely careless gaiety. You know your duty, you do it, and you are content.” Again, “The first cannon ball will shatter all your cynical jests, and the flag will no more be a rag at the top of a pole.” . . . When the royalist nobleman is sarcastically rebuked: ‘Enthusiasm for a flag that is not your own?’ ‘Bah!’ retorts he, ‘You won't catch the color of the flag through the smoke of the powder.’ ”

In “*La Contagion*” (’66), four years before the prophecy is fulfilled, Augier makes his honest man cry out: “Good-bye, gentlemen, and farewell! Con-

science? Duties? Family? Trample under the hoofs of your herded cattle all that is good and holy! But mark me, a day is coming when the truths that have been jeered at and hooted will be affirmed with a roar of thunder. Good-bye, gentlemen. I am not one of your set."

Clearly it is a case with Augier of kill or cure; cure with comedy, or trust providence to kill, and God—for a resurrection! Augier is a prophet like Hugo. And who is the great utterer of that period? Hugo, who saw things melodramatically from a distance, magnified and out of perspective, and gave us his immortal "*Les Châtiments*," or Emile Augier with his noble series of satiric plays, silenced by the fulfillment of his prophet's prediction? For after the Franco-Prussian War be it noted the gracious Augier thundered no more.

VI.

But to return to our series. If "*Les Effrontés*" introduced us to this decadent world of the Second Empire, "*Le Fils de Giboyer*" makes us understand many things and shows us perhaps for the first time the pathos of corruption. Giboyer has sold his conscience, first to maintain his father; then to rear as an honest man his son, Maximilien Gérard. He has never acknowledged this son, whom he adores, lest his father's example and reputation should injure him. "I shall make of Maximilien what I never could be—an honorable and an honored man. It's my fad to serve as manure, enriching the soil, that a certain lily be nourished to perfect beauty. Isn't my fad as good as that of another?" Again Giboyer expresses himself: "I have written a book that contains all my experience

—all my own ideas. I think it is good, and what's more—true. I am proud of it. It is a sufficient excuse for my life. But I sha'n't publish it with my name, for fear my name might not unjustly discredit it."

Now this poor Giboyer, this pathetic "game-bagger," serves as the *deus in machina* of "Le Fils-de Giboyer," which perhaps is the most charming of the series under discussion. His foil and dupe is Marechal, who can best be described by his own words in pompous soliloquy: "There will soon be nothing sacred on earth; no way of enjoying one's fortune in peace—so that the people *must* have a religion" (contemplating himself as the chosen parliamentary tool of the nobility)—"I am born for an orator; see, I have the voice! The personal presence! Gestures! All the gifts a man can't acquire! As for the rest"—(Looking at the speech made by Giboyer and lying on the table)—"that can be learned by heart." After a few bars of the music, Giboyer interrupts himself: "Ha, what a speech! It almost kindles the fire of conviction in myself!"

The plot of our play is ingenious and yet very simple. The speech Giboyer has written for Marechal converts or rather perverts Maximilien. "It distresses me like all reasoning to which you can make no valid answer, but against which nevertheless a deep-seated feeling protests." So Giboyer, to save his son intellectually and politically, confesses to him that he wrote the speech himself. An intrigue robs Marechal before public delivery of the speech, and Giboyer provides another expressing this time his real opinions, which speech he pretends to have been written by Maximilien, and with which Marechal makes a tremendous, unex-

pected success. Then Giboyer holds over Marechal the secret of the speech, and so obtains his consent for the marriage of the politician's daughter to Maximilien. It is in vain that Maximilien protests to his father, whom he now knows. "What right can you have to render me dishonorable services?" "Ah, my boy," replies Giboyer, "to keep you, my son, from temptation, to keep you clean and honorable. I began.....for my father." Maximilien interrupts. "And so now you continue at it for your son?" (Maximilien aside)—"Heaven, I am his virtue." Giboyer returns to the victorious assault. "Grant me this one only boon, my son, to see you happy." Here let the curtain drop.

We shall not have space in this brief article to deal with our pentalogy and shall therefore conclude with comments on the third part of the trilogy, so that the reader of our translation can form a juster notion of the value they have as parts of the larger whole.

Granted a society as thoroughly corrupt as that of Napoleon the Third's regime, it is clear there will have to be some sort of cynic philosophy in the mouth of every one for justification at the secret judgment-bar of his neighbor's conscience. However we may acquit ourselves, we know that the spectator—even the friendliest—views our conduct with wholly impartial alien eyes, and penetrates to the core of the mystery—or rather, mystification. For this purpose of throwing dust in the eyes of our interested neighbor, since he is doubtless an indifferent philosopher, no philosophy will serve as such. The antidote to the divine comic is, from the hellish point of view, devilish laughter—in a word the cynic jeer, the jest of unbelief, the vicious caricature of honor and virtue, flippantly light or

sardonic—*la blague*. “La Contagion” gives us a definition of this devilish laughter in the dialogue of Lucien, the disciple of the villain d’Estrigaud and the tenacious conservative Tenancier :

LUCIEN. It is a kind of wit—a very modern kind. It is due to a reaction against the emphatic iterations of the commonplace in which our fathers so freely indulged. Yes, they have so used and abused the fine phrases, till these have become a cant, that disgusts us young men of today.

TENANCIER. So much the worse for you, sir. Fine phrases express fine sentiments. Fatigue with the former soon degenerates into distaste for the latter. What you most delight in covering with ridicule is virtue, enthusiasm, or for the matter of that, any definite convictions. Oh, of course, you don’t profess disbelief. Heaven forbid! You don’t rise above mere indifference. Anything beyond is in your eyes pedantry. This abominable jesting spirit plays a greater part in lowering the moral level than is generally supposed. Your *blague* is after all nothing more nor less than derision of whatever uplifts the spirit. No school that, for honest men and good citizens. One begins, of course, by being better than one lets on, and then by degrees one is as bad or even worse.

In the course of the play we see Lucien receiving lessons in the art of devilish laughter from the initiate d’Estrigaud. Before the pupil is set up for worship the gilded image of the great king—the traditional Sardanapalus. Lucien holds up his hands in devout astonishment at this master-stroke of genius: “How horribly, how deliciously immoral!” To which d’Estrigaud with a soothing gesture replies: “Oh, no, my boy; just the inevitable logical conclusion, drawn gently from our premises. Of all the sages and worthies of antiquity Sardanapalus is the only one who was endowed with common sense. Compare, for instance, his death with that of Socrates. The one dies pitiably in obedience to the law—the death of a pedantic schoolmaster. The other, like the sublime rebel he

was, makes of his palace a funeral pyre, and takes along with him all his delights of which Fate thought to deprive him in the end."

So Augier shows us that the spirit of *la blague* sneering at all unselfishness, all devotion, as callow, silly, absurd, since more or less altruistic, ultimately leads its professors to glorify the vices, pursued and adored as perverse virtues—yes, will even induce on their behalf a devilish enthusiasm, wholly unmindful of self-interest, a devotion to the preposterous, to the criminally magnificent and megalomaniac. Tenancier clearly diagnoses the case: "In order to be caught by fine phrases—by cant as you call it—all that seems to be necessary is that the spirit of the fine phrases prove sufficiently ignoble and dishonorable. Ah, how pitiful! How pitiful!"

In the course of our play the innocent young man, André, is saved by the supervention of a moment's seriousness, as the thought of his mother's supposed shame smote him between the eyes and he awoke to behold the abyss at his very feet.

D'Estrigaud, the incarnation of this evil spirit of detraction and derision, is finally thwarted in "La Contagion." Poetic justice is made to vindicate virtue. This, as a lover of pure comic art, one cannot but regret. Yet no sane critic will overmuch blame Augier. If Molière could not trust his audience (including such men as Fenelon), and posterity (with its Rousseaus), to catch the drift of his great satire on the hypocrite done in the cause of sincere piety; if in order to have "Tartuffe" played at all Molière had to resort to the crude device of introducing Louis XIV. in the last act as *deus ex machina*, to set all things right by the punishment of the infamous hypocrite; clearly Augier, the less gifted disciple of Molière, having no *Grand*

Monarque to side with his masterpiece, to help him out at the last curtain, or to exercise his influence among the hostile *beau monde*, clearly Augier must bow to the will of the Philistine theatre-goer. Really d'Estrigaud should not have been thwarted. He should have been allowed to compass his ruin, by the total extinction of the divine spark in himself. He should have been damned, not punished. His absolute success in depravity would have been a truer damnation ethically, because truer psychologically, and more consistent comically. In plain terms the moral question at issue is so awfully serious to Augier and his audience, that they cannot let the comic Dionysus settle it in his own characteristic and artistic way; the pedagogue and the law-giver must intrude with pointing pole and chastising rod. So there is really no laughter at the expense of d'Estrigaud. He serves like the devils in those Alpine pilgrimages, to which Browning alludes so deliciously, intended to convince the peasant of his righteous devotion by giving an outlet to his energy, in well-aimed mud-slinging—the more mud slung at the depicted devil the holier his soul! It is a pity that human nature has not yet reached that point of development where it can allow the spirit of pure art to draw in sweet equanimity the conclusions from its premises. So Ben Jonson's Fox must meet with condign legal punishment, and d'Estrigaud must be defeated by the mechanical workings of the plot. The more's the pity, we repeat; because as a consequence the interest of "La Contagion" lies chiefly in the logical exposition of the character of d'Estrigaud, while the comedy resides, on the other hand, chiefly in the playwright's intrigue. So the comic spirit and the dramatic interest do not make one common impact, and the

work remains from the point of view of the highest art, a *torso*—headless, therefore brainless—provided with artificial limbs of dramaturgic cork!

VII.

Looking back over the work of Augier as a whole, we cannot but feel that whatever else he did or did not do, he answered effectively all the calumnies directed by the Puritans of all time against the Stage as an institution. His satiric dramas at least are lofty in spirit, dignified in style, sententious and stern. They exhibit a compact structure—a familiar yet tersely significant dialogue—and a dexterous stage technique. Nothing is lacking to put Augier among the greatest save only enough of that *vis comica*, that vivacious brilliancy, of Aristophanes and Molière, or of that *saeva indignatio* of Juvenal, the Old Testament prophets, of Dante and Swift, and of Hugo at his best. Had either or both of these gifts been granted him, we should not reckon Augier among the great French Comic dramatists, but rather among the score or so of World Geniuses. As it is, all honor to him and all gratitude.

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.

GIBOYER'S SON

BY EMILE AUGIER.

A Comedy in Five Acts.

Translated by Benedict Papot.

PREFACE.

Whatever may have been said, this comedy is not a political play in the common sense of the word; it is a social play. It attacks and defends only ideals, irrespective of any form of government.

Its real title would be "The Clericals," if such title were suitable for the stage.

The party it aims at has in its ranks men of all kinds, partisans of the empire as well as of the older and younger branch of the Bourbons. Marechal, who is a Deputy, the Marquis d'Auberive, and Couturier de la Haute-Sarthe represent, in my comedy, the three fractions of the clerical party which are united in their hatred or fear of democracy; and, if Giboyer calls them all legitimists, it is because, as a matter of fact, the legitimists alone are logical and did not give up their principle while fighting the spirit of '89.

The antagonism of the old and modern principles is, therefore, the subject of my play. I defy anyone to find therein one word going beyond this point; and I am accustomed to say things frankly enough

so that no one has the right to accuse me of using innuendoes.

Then, whence come the objections which have arisen against my comedy? What clerical cleverness awakens against it the anger of parties which were not attacked? By what falsification of my words can they pretend to believe that I am attacking fallen governments? It is certainly very clever tactics to awaken against me a lofty sentiment which finds an echo in the hearts of all honest people; but where are these enemies whom I strike while they are down? I see them upon all the platforms; they are getting on board the triumphal chariot; and when I, weakling, dare to pull at their boots, they turn upon me with indignation, clamoring: "Respect the fallen foe!"

Really it is too funny!

Another reproach was directed toward me; it was that I pictured personalities.

I pictured but one: Deodat. But reprisals against this defamer are so legitimate and he is so well armed to defend himself!

As for the eminent and justly honored statesman, whom they accuse me of having put upon the stage, I protest energetically against this charge; none of my characters resembles him in any way. I know the rights and the duties of comedy as well as my adversaries; it must respect persons, but it has the right to attack facts. I took hold of a fact of contemporary history, which seemed to me to be a striking symptom of the troubled situation of our minds; I took therefrom only what belonged directly to my subject and I took care to change the circumstances so as to remove any personal character.

What more can be asked?

Shall I answer those who blame my comedy for

having been authorized, that is to say for being played? That is a delicate point. If it is permissible to compare small things with great things, I would ask these puritans: who ever dreamed of blaming Tartuffe because of Louis XIV.'s toleration?

EMILE AUGIER.

GIBOYER'S SON.

A Comedy in Five Acts, by Emile Augier.

Translated by Benedict Papot.

Represented for the first time in the Theatre Francais, on the First of December, 1862.

CHARACTERS:

MARQUIS D'AUBERIVE.

COUNT D'OUTREVILLE.

MR. MARECHAL.

GIBOYER.

MAXIMILIEN GERARD.

BARONESS PFEFFERS.

MADAM MARECHAL.

FERNANDE.

DUBOIS, *valet to the Marquis.*

COUTURIER DE LA HAUTE-SARTHE.

VISCOUNT DE VRILLIERE.

CHEVALIER DE GERMOISE.

MADAM DE LA VIEUXTOUR.

Place, Paris. Time, the Present (1862).

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GIBOYER'S SON

A Comedy in Five Acts, by Emile Augier.

[The Marquis' private sitting room. Door at the back. To the right of the door a small bookcase; to the left a cabinet containing weapons. Down stage, left, a chimney in front of which are a small sofa and a small table. In the middle of the stage, a table. The Marquis is finishing his luncheon at the small table; Dubois, a napkin on his arm, holds in his hand a bottle of Xeres wine.]

MARQUIS. I believe that my appetite has come back to me.

DUBOIS. Yes, sir. And it came back a long way. Who would think, on seeing you, that you have just been ill? You look like a bridegroom.

MARQUIS. You think so?

DUBOIS. And I am not the only one. All the gossips of the neighborhood keep on telling me: "M. Dubois, that man"—begging your pardon for the liberty, sir—"that man will marry again, and sooner than later. He's got matrimony in his eye."

MARQUIS. They do, eh?

DUBOIS. They may not be wrong.

MARQUIS. I want you to know, Dubois, that when a man has had the misfortune of losing an angel like the Marchioness d'Auberive he has not the slightest desire of marrying a second one. Pour me some wine.

DUBOIS. I understand that, but you haven't any heir. That's very sad.

MARQUIS. How do you know I would have one?

DUBOIS. Oh! I am sure of that.

MARQUIS. I do not care to be a father *in partibus infidelium*, and that is why a widower I am and a widower I'll remain. You may tell that to the gossips.

DUBOIS. But your name, sir! The old name of Auberive, will you allow it to die out? Allow an old servant to be deeply grieved over it.

MARQUIS. The deuce! my dear fellow, do not be more royalist than the king!

DUBOIS. And what's to become of me? If there are no more Auberives in the world, whom am I to serve?

MARQUIS. You have some money laid by; you'll live like a bourgeois and be your own master.

DUBOIS. What a downfall! I'll never get over it. Your old servant will follow you into the grave.

MARQUIS. Fifteen steps behind, if you please. Dubois, you move me. Dry your tears, there might be hope yet.

DUBOIS. What, my master yields to my humble prayers?

MARQUIS. Nothing of the kind. I have served my time and shall not reënlist. But I care as much about my name as you do yourself, you may be sure of that, and I have found a very ingenious combination to perpetuate it without exposing myself.

DUBOIS. How fortunate! I do not dare to ask you—

MARQUIS. That's right! Your modesty is very becoming to you. Let it suffice you to know that I am preparing an Auberive for you. This very day I am expecting—well, I am expecting some people today.

DUBOIS. Oh, you best of masters!

MARQUIS. You are a good fellow; I shall not forget you.

DUBOIS. [*Aside.*] I hope not!

MARQUIS. Clear the table. I shall ride today at two o'clock.

BARONESS. [*Appearing at the door.*] Ride?

DUBOIS. [*Announcing.*] Baroness Pfeffers. [*Exit.*]

MARQUIS. Ah, my dear Baroness, to what is due the honor of a visit from such a beautiful caller to an old widower like me?

BARONESS. Really, Marquis, I am wondering at it myself. On seeing you, I forget why I came and feel very much like going away at once.

MARQUIS. This is wicked. Sit down.

BARONESS. No, indeed! What! You deny visitors for a week, your servants wear tragic faces, you keep your friends in anxiety, they are all ready to mourn for you, and when I reach you I find you at the table!

MARQUIS. I am going to explain. I am an old beau, and would not show myself, for the world, when I am in bad humor; now, gout changes my temper to such an extent that my best friends would not know me. That's why I hide myself.

BARONESS. Good. I'll hasten to reassure our friends.

MARQUIS. They aren't as worried as all that. Tell me about them.

BARONESS. But there is one in my carriage, waiting for me.

MARQUIS. I'll send word to him to come up.

BARONESS. But—I do not know whether you know him.

MARQUIS. What's his name?

BARONESS. I met him by chance—

MARQUIS. And brought him over on the chance of

his being needed. [*Rings.*] You take maternal care of me. [*To Dubois.*] Go down. You will find an ecclesiastic in the Baroness' carriage. Tell him that I am very much obliged to him for his kindness, but that I am not ready to die this morning.

BARONESS. Ah, Marquis, what would our friends say if they heard you?

MARQUIS. Bosh! I am the party's *enfant terrible*, the spoiled child, every one knows that! Dubois, you will add that the Baroness requests the Abbé to have himself driven home and send back the carriage for her.

BARONESS. But—

MARQUIS. No help for it. You may go, Dubois. Now you are my prisoner.

BARONESS. This is scarcely proper.

MARQUIS. [*Kissing her hand.*] Flatterer. Sit down this time and let's talk of serious things. [*Taking newspaper from the table.*] Gout did not prevent me from reading our paper. That's where we feel the loss of our poor Deodat.

BARONESS. What a loss! What a disaster for our cause!

MARQUIS. I mourned him.

BARONESS. What a talent! what fervor, what sarcasm!

MARQUIS. He was the hussar of orthodoxy. He will be remembered as the angelic pamphleteer, *Conviciator angelicus*. And now that we have paid tribute to his great soul—

BARONESS. You speak of it very lightly, Marquis.

MARQUIS. Didn't I tell you I mourned him! Let's see whom we can get to replace him.

BARONESS. To succeed him, you mean. Heaven does not create two such men at one time.

MARQUIS. What would you say if I told you that

I have secured a second edition? Yes, Baroness, I have unearthed a devilish, cynical and virulent writer, who spits and bespatters; a fellow who would drown his own father in epigrams for a small remuneration, and would devour him with a dash of salt for five francs more.

BARONESS. Excuse me, Deodat believed what he wrote.

MARQUIS. Of course! That's the result of the struggle. There are no more mercenaries when the battle rages; the blows they receive give them a conviction. I'll wager that before a week is over this man will be ours, body and soul.

BARONESS. If you have no other guaranties of his faithfulness—

MARQUIS. I have. I've got him.

BARONESS. How?

MARQUIS. Never mind. I have him.

BARONESS. And for what are you waiting to introduce him to us?

MARQUIS. His arrival, first, and then his consent. He lives in Lyons; I expect him to-day or to-morrow. Give me time to dress him up and I'll introduce him.

BARONESS. In the meantime, I'll tell the committee of your find.

MARQUIS. Please do. And speaking of the committee, my dear Baroness, you would be very kind if you would use your influence therein for something which concerns me personally.

BARONESS. My influence is not very great.

MARQUIS. Is this modesty or the exordium to a refusal?

BARONESS. If it must be one thing or the other, it is modesty.

MARQUIS. Let me tell you, my beautiful friend,

if you do not know it already, that these gentlemen are under too great obligation to you to refuse you anything.

BARONESS. Because they use my parlors for their meetings?

MARQUIS. That's one reason. But the great, true and inestimable service you render them daily is that you have wonderful eyes.

BARONESS. It's just like an unbeliever like you to pay attention to those things.

MARQUIS. It is just like me; but it is much more like those grave men whose chaste vows never go beyond this mystical sensuality which is the shamelessness of virtue.

BARONESS. You are dreaming!

MARQUIS. Believe what I tell you. That is why all serious cliques have always selected as headquarters the parlor of a woman who is sometimes beautiful, other times witty. You are both, madam. Judge of your power.

BARONESS. You flatter me too much. Your case must be detestable.

MARQUIS. If it were a good case, I could win it alone.

BARONESS. Come, do not keep me waiting.

MARQUIS. Here goes: We have chosen an orator in the Chamber for the campaign we are preparing against the University; I would like the choice to be—

BARONESS. M. Marechal.

MARQUIS. Right.

BARONESS. What are you thinking about, Marquis? M. Marechal!

MARQUIS. I know, I know! But we do not need a shining light, since we furnish the speeches. M.

Marechal reads as fluently as any one else, I assure you.

BARONESS. We elected him Deputy on your recommendation. That's a great deal!

MARQUIS. M. Marechal is an excellent recruit.

BARONESS. It pleases you to say so.

MARQUIS. What more do you want! A former subscriber to the Constitutionel, a liberal, a Voltairian, who passes over to the enemy with arms and baggage—would you like anything better! M. Marechal is not a man, my dear madam, it's the high bourgeois which comes over to us. I love this good bourgeois class which has developed a hatred for the Revolution, since it can gain nothing more from it which would solidify the tide that brought it to power and make a little feudal France for its own benefit. By Jove, we must let it pull the chestnuts out of the fire for us! It is this pleasing spectacle which has led me to play politics again. So, long live M. Marechal and all those of his ilk, the bourgeois by divine right! Let us cover these precious allies with honors and glory until the day when our triumph shall send them back to their mills.

BARONESS. But we have already several deputies of the same ilk. Why should we select the least capable of them as our orator?

MARQUIS. I tell you, again, that it is not a question of capability.

BARONESS. You push forward this M. Marechal a great deal.

MARQUIS. Can't help it! I consider him somewhat as a client of my family. His grandfather was a farmer of mine; I am his daughter's surrogate; those are bonds, don't you know.

BARONESS. You do not tell me everything.

MARQUIS. I tell all I know.

BARONESS. Then, allow me to complete your information. There is a rumor that, in times gone by, you were not insensible to the charms of the first Mme. Marechal.

MARQUIS. I hope you do not believe that foolish story?

BARONESS. You do so much for M. Marechal that—

MARQUIS. It seems that I am making amends? Goodness me, who can feel secure against evil tongues? No one—not even you, my dear Baroness!

BARONESS. I am curious to know what they could say about me.

MARQUIS. Foolishness, which I would not repeat to you.

BARONESS. Do you believe them, then?

MARQUIS. Heaven forbid! What appearance is there that your late husband married his mother's lady companion. It made me angry!

BARONESS. That's more than such a poor fabrication was worth.

MARQUIS. I answered back pretty plainly, I assure you.

BARONESS. I do not doubt it.

MARQUIS. Nevertheless, you are right in wishing to marry again.

BARONESS. Who told you that I wish it.

MARQUIS. Ah! there's the rub! You do not treat me as a friend. I deserve your confidence all the more because I do not need it, for I know you as if I were your father. The help of a sorcerer is not to be despised, Baroness.

BARONESS. [*Seating herself near the table.*] Show me your sorcery.

MARQUIS. [*Seating himself opposite her.*] Willingly! Give me your hand.

BARONESS. [*Removing her glove.*] You'll give it back to me?

MARQUIS. And what is more, I shall help you to dispose of it. [*Looking into the Baroness' hand.*] You are handsome, rich and a widow.

BARONESS. It sounds like a reading by Mlle. Lenormand!

MARQUIS. With all the facilities, not to say temptations, for a brilliant and frivolous life, you chose to play a part almost austere, a rôle that requires irreproachable morals, which you have.

BARONESS. If it were a rôle, you must admit that it would very much resemble a penance.

MARQUIS. Not for you.

BARONESS. How do you know?

MARQUIS. I see it in your hand, of course! I even see that the reverse would cost you more in view of the unalterable calmness with which nature has endowed your heart.

BARONESS. [*Pulling back her hand.*] Tell me at once that I am a monster.

MARQUIS. I will in time. The naïve ones take you for a saint; those who are sceptical, for a woman greedy for power; I, Guy-François Condorier, Marquis d'Auberive, take you for a smart little Berlinese who is building herself a throne right in the middle of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. You already reign over the men, but the women look askance at you; your reputation offends them, and, not knowing how to attack you, they fall back upon this rumor of which I spoke a little while ago. In short, your flag is not big enough and you are looking for another ample enough to cover everything. "Paris is well worth a mass," said Henry the Fourth—that is also your opinion.

BARONESS. It is said that somnambulists must

never be crossed; yet, allow me to call to your attention the fact that if I had wanted a husband, with my fortune and my position in society, I could have found twenty.

MARQUIS. Twenty, yes—one, no. You forget that confounded little rumor—

BARONESS. [*Rising.*] Only fools believe it.

MARQUIS. That's the trouble. You are sought only by witty men, too witty even—and it's a fool you are looking for.

BARONESS. Why?

MARQUIS. Because you have no intention to give yourself a master. You need a husband whom you may hang in your parlor like a family portrait—nothing more.

BARONESS. Have you finished, my dear sorcerer? All this is perfectly senseless, of course; but you amused me, so I cannot refuse you anything.

MARQUIS. Marechal will be speaker?

BARONESS. Or I'll lose my name.

MARQUIS. And you will lose your name—I'll take the responsibility for that.

BARONESS. You do anything you please with me.

MARQUIS. Ah! Baroness, how quickly I would take you up, were I but sixty. [*Dubois brings in a card on a silver tray, Marquis taking the card.*] Count Hugues d'Outreville. [*To Dubois.*] Show him in, by Jove, show him in!—No!—Tell the count I'll receive him in a minute. [*Exit Dubois.*]

BARONESS. I am in your way. Serves you right; you should not have sent my carriage away.

MARQUIS. I'll have to introduce the young man to you some day or another—why not to-day?

BARONESS. Who is it?

MARQUIS. My nearest relative, a poor relative.

I have summoned him to Paris to make his acquaintance before bequeathing my fortune to him.

BARONESS. Your curiosity is quite legitimate. How does it happen that you do not know him?

MARQUIS. He lives in the Comtat, like a true feudal gentleman, and the last time I went there, during the life of his worthy father, twenty years ago, Hugues was seven or eight years old.

BARONESS. He has a fine name.

MARQUIS. His coat-of-arms is azure with three gold bezants. But do not dream about him; he is not the kind of husband you need; he lacks all the nullities your ideal should have.

BARONESS. You said you did not know him.

MARQUIS. I know the race; it is violent and enormous; the father and the grandfather were six feet tall, with shoulders to match, and I remember that when I jumped little Hugues on my knees, I had all I could do—you'll see the fellow. I pray you be indulgent toward him; these country gentlemen are not always as polite as they might be, you know; great hunters, great eaters and keen after the pretty girls.

BARONESS. Goodness gracious!

MARQUIS. We shall train this fellow. [*He rings—to Dubois, who enters.*] Show him in.

DUBOIS. [*Announcing.*] Count d'Outreville.

MARQUIS. [*Going to meet him with open arms.*] Come along, come along. [*Very much astonished, he pauses for a moment.*] What, are you the big fellow I used to jump on my knees?

COUNT. You must indeed find me quite grown-up, sir.

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] Yes, like a bean-pole. [*Aloud.*] Excuse my surprise, cousin. I expected broader shoulders on hearing your name.

COUNT. Yes, my grandfather and my father were Goliaths; I take after my mother.

MARQUIS. You are welcome, nevertheless. Thank your star which sends you into my house just in time to be introduced to Baroness Pfeffers.

COUNT. [*Bowing.*] Madame is undoubtedly a relative of the Baroness Sophie Pfeffers?

BARONESS. I am she, Count.

COUNT. What! This model of piety, of austerity, of—

BARONESS. Please, please, sir.

MARQUIS. Why, yes, this model is neither old nor ugly; does it astonish you?

COUNT. I admit that—But, *gratior pulchro in corpore virtus*.

BARONESS. My dear Count, I deserve neither of your praises.

COUNT. [*Dumfounded.*] Ah, Madam, could I have suspected that you understood Latin—

MARQUIS. And who the dickens did you suspect of knowing it?

COUNT. Forgive me, Madam, for my involuntary familiarity. [*To the Marquis.*] How happy M. de Sainte-Agathe will be when he learns—

MARQUIS. Who in the name of goodness is M. de Sainte-Agathe?

COUNT. You haven't heard of M. de Sainte-Agathe? You astonish me, for M. de Sainte-Agathe is one of our shining lights. I was fortunate enough to have him as a teacher and he is still my director in everything.

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] That's no gentleman, that's a beadle.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] How charmingly naïve!

DUBOIS. [*Entering.*] The Baroness' carriage is here.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] Azure with three gold bezants! [*Aloud.*] I shall run away, Marquis; I am in too great danger here of sinning through pride. Good-bye, Count. Your cousin will do me the honor of bringing you to my house, but I warn you that you will have to leave flattery at my parlor door,—Stay, Marquis; invalids do not accompany their visitors. [*Exits.*]

COUNT. Is this lady married?

MARQUIS. Yes, cousin—I have been very ill—don't worry, it's all over.

COUNT. I breathe again! And what was the trouble, pray?

MARQUIS. The Baroness is a widow. I thank you for the interest you show in her.

COUNT. [*Aside.*] He is very peculiar.

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] I don't like my heir. [*Aloud.*] Let's talk business. I have no children, you are my nearest relative and my intention is, as I wrote you, to leave all my property to you.

COUNT. And I promise you to acknowledge your benefaction by using it in a way that will be pleasing to God.

MARQUIS. Make whatever use of it you please.—But I put two conditions to what you call my benefaction; I hope that neither of them will be repugnant to you?

COUNT. As the first is to add your name to mine, I consider it as a favor.

MARQUIS. Very good. And the second, to marry a woman of my choice, what do you think of that?

COUNT. I consider it a filial duty.

MARQUIS. That's a strong expression.

COUNT. The right one, sir, for I might say that since receiving your adorable letter. I have felt all the feelings of a son toward you.

MARQUIS. What? Right away? Just like that?

COUNT. So much so that I no longer considered that I had the right to dispose of my hand without your consent, and that I did not hesitate to break off a very rich marriage which M. de Sainte-Agathe had arranged for me at Avignon.

MARQUIS. I hope the matter hadn't gone very far?

COUNT. Only the first notice had been read in church.

MARQUIS. Is that all!—And under what pretext did you break it off?

COUNT. Well, it was not a family that deserved much consideration; parvenues, they were. I hate the bourgeois.

MARQUIS. The deuce! How are you going to manage? It is a bourgeoisie I intended you to marry.

COUNT. Ah! Ah! Charming.

MARQUIS. She is very rich and very beautiful, but very plebeian.

COUNT. Is it possible you are serious?

MARQUIS. [*Arising.*] So serious that this marriage is a *sine qua non* condition to my inheritance.

COUNT. Allow me to say that I do not understand what interest—

MARQUIS. It is very simple; she is a young girl I have known since her birth and for whom I have an almost paternal affection. I want her children to inherit my name, that's all.

COUNT. She is an orphan, at least?

MARQUIS. Only on her mother's side.

COUNT. Well, that's something. Mothers-in-law are the great drawback to mesalliances.

MARQUIS. But I must tell you that the father is married again and that his second wife is very

much alive. But she belongs to the highest nobility. [*Aside.*] Through her pretensions. [*Aloud.*] And she signs herself Aglae Marechal, née de la Vert-piliere.

COUNT. And the father?

MARQUIS. He is a former ironmaster, a noble industry, as you know; a well-thinking man, a Deputy belonging to our party.

COUNT. And his name you say is Marechal?

MARQUIS. Marechal.

COUNT. How short. Couldn't he add the name of some landed property to make the crudity of the mesalliance less glaring?

MARQUIS. I have something better than that. You would marry without hesitation Cathelineau's daughter?

COUNT. Certainly, but what is the connection?

MARQUIS. Between a soldier and an orator? Speech is also a sword. Within a week, your father-in-law will be the speaker of our party.

COUNT. You don't say!

MARQUIS. I got our friends to consent to his speaking for us in the coming session. Hush! it is still a secret.

COUNT. Why didn't you say that in the first place, Cousin? There is no longer any mesalliance. The good cause ennobles its champion.—And you say that the young lady is rich?

MARQUIS. She will bring you enough to await my inheritance patiently.

COUNT. May it never come to pass.—And she is beautiful?

MARQUIS. She is simply the prettiest person that I know, my dear fellow. [*Aside.*] And I boast of it. [*Aloud.*] You will make her happy, won't you?

COUNT. I am bold enough to assume it, sir. I

understand all the duties imposed by marriage; my youth has been a long preparation for this sacred bond and I am able to say that I shall be stainless when I assume it.

MARQUIS. What?

COUNT. Ask M. de Sainte-Agathe, who knows my most secret actions and my most secret thoughts.

MARQUIS. Many compliments, but your innocence must be like that of Orestes, my good fellow; it must be becoming a burden to you? At least I hope so.

COUNT. [*Lowering his eyes.*] I admit it.

MARQUIS. Good.

COUNT. May I ask you if my intended is a brunette?

MARQUIS. So this interests you.

COUNT. It is allowable, it is even recommended that one should seek in a wife some of these perishable charms which add another grace to virtue. At least, this is M. de Sainte-Agathe's opinion.

MARQUIS. That's right; we haven't heard of him for a long time. Tell me, Cousin, does M. de Sainte-Agathe also dress you?

COUNT. Why?

MARQUIS. Because your clothes have such a clerical cut; I can't introduce you in that deplorable costume; I will tell my valet to send you my tailor.

DUBOIS. [*Entering.*] M. Marechal is here; shall I bring him in?

MARQUIS. I should say so. [*To the Count.*] He comes in the nick of time.

COUNT. Does he know your plans?

MARQUIS. Not yet, and I shall not mention them to him for a few days. [*Aside.*] I must give his mind time to work.

MARECHAL. [*Entering.*] By Jove, I am delighted. I was coming to get news about you and I was some-

what worried, I can confess that to you, and I learn that you are to go out riding. By Jove, Marquis, this is just like you.

MARQUIS. Gout is like seasickness; when it is over, it's over.—Allow me, my dear friend, to introduce Count Hugues d'Outreville, my cousin.

MARECHAL. Highly honored, Count. You see in me the oldest comrade of our dear Marquis. My grandfather was a farmer of his, and I am not ashamed of it; my family gained ground, his lost some, and so we met on the level, one forgetting the superiority of his birth and the other—

MARQUIS. That of his fortune.

MARECHAL. We personify the alliance of the old and new aristocracies.

COUNT. You slander yourself, sir; you are quite one of us by the same right as Cathelineau.

MARECHAL. What's that you say?

COUNT. It's but a step from a great soldier to a great orator. Speech is also a sword. You are the speaker of the party.

MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] I wonder what's the matter with him.

MARQUIS. You shall become better acquainted some other time, gentlemen. You ought to appreciate one another. For the time being, my dear Count, do not forget that you have to consult my tailor; it is an indispensable preliminary to Parisian life.

COUNT. Since you allow me. [*To Marechal.*] I shall have the honor of seeing you again, sir.

MARQUIS. [*Accompanying him to the door.*] What do you think of him?

COUNT. Fine appearance; he looks like a genius.

MARQUIS. You're a great judge of human nature. Good-bye.

MARECHAL. Are you sure that your cousin is in his right senses! Cathelineau! The speaker of the party!

MARQUIS. He is a chatterbox who robbed me of the pleasure of being first to tell you of the great news. But to begin with, my dear Marechal, are you quite sure of the permanency of your conversion? Don't you feel any longer within your heart the slightest liberal virus?

MARECHAL. This suspicion is an outrage.

MARQUIS. Have you completely given up Voltaire and his pomps?

MARECHAL. Don't speak to me of that monster. 'Twas he and his friend Rousseau who destroyed everything. As long as the doctrines of these good-for-nothings are not dead and buried nothing will be sacred, and there will be no possibility of enjoying one's fortune quietly. The people must have a religion, Marquis.

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] Since he is no longer one of them.

MARECHAL. I'll go further than that; even we ought to have one. Let's go back frankly to the faith of our fathers.

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] His fathers! Purchasers of national property!

MARECHAL. We'll master the Revolution only by destroying the University, the hotbed of philosophy; that's my opinion.

MARQUIS. Then, my friend, you may rejoice. We shall open fire against the University in this very session.

MARECHAL. You overwhelm me with joy.

MARQUIS. [*Putting his hand on his shoulder.*] Don't you believe that in this memorable campaign

the voice of our orator will ring far and wide and that he may be called the speaker of our party?

MARECHAL. What!

MARQUIS. Yes, my dear friend, we have thought of you for this magnificent part.

MARECHAL. Is that possible? Why, you are offering me immortality.

MARQUIS. Yes, something like that.

MARECHAL. Dominate the assembly with gesture and voice, scatter one's thoughts all over the earth upon the wings of Fame! But, tell me, do you believe I will be able?

MARQUIS. I was just admiring your eloquence.

MARECHAL. Yes, between us, it goes,—but I'll never dare in public.

MARQUIS. It's a question of habit. The best way to learn to swim is to jump into the water.

MARECHAL. Yes, but I must not keep on floundering.

MARQUIS. We'll give you a life preserver. As your first speech will be a sort of manifesto, we'll give it to you ready made; you will have only to read it.

MARECHAL. Good. If I only need courage and conviction—the public won't know that the speech isn't mine?

MARQUIS. Not unless you babble.

MARECHAL. You don't believe I would, do you?—And when will you give me the manuscript?

MARQUIS. In a few days.

MARECHAL. I shall not sleep till then. I can confess my weakness to you; I love Glory.

MARQUIS. All great souls do.

MARECHAL. Am I quite one of you now?

MARQUIS. Quite.

MARECHAL. Well then, allow me to call you Con-

dorier, as you call me Marechal. Call it childish if you want to—

MARQUIS. Do. You'll give me back my title after you obtain one.

MARECHAL. That's how I understand equality. That's true equality for you.

DUBOIS. [*Entering.*] A rather shabby-looking fellow pretends that the Marquis made an appointment with him.

MARQUIS. In a minute. [*To Marechal.*] I am sorry to send you away, but this is important business.

MARECHAL. No need of such ceremony between people like us. Ta-ta, my dear Condorier, ta-ta. [*Exit.*]

MARQUIS. [*To Dubois.*] Now show him in. [*Alone.*] The fool, and I'll have to make him a baron yet. [*Smiling.*] That man will never know all I have done for him.

DUBOIS. [*Announcing.*] M. Giboyer. [*Enter Giboyer.*]

MARQUIS. Why, good morning, M. Giboyer.

GIBOYER. Marquis, I am yours humbly.

MARQUIS. Mine humbly? Ah, yes. Beg your pardon, I have somewhat lost the hang of your picturesque expressions. I have learned through your—what do you call Maximilien?—your ward?

GIBOYER. That would be pretty ambitious—a guardian is a luxury for which the little fellow had no use. I am, if you are willing, his uncle after the fashion of Bretagne.

MARQUIS. Let's call him your nursling. So then, I learned through your nursling that you were coming to spend a week in Paris and I was overcome by a great desire to see you.

GIBOYER. You are too kind, Marquis. Your desire

and mine met. Believe me, I would not have gone through Paris without knocking at your door. I am not ungrateful.

MARQUIS. Don't let us speak of that. Do you know that you have not changed since we lost sight of one another? How do you do it?

GIBOYER. We must believe that my father, foreseeing the ups and downs of my existence, built me of stone and cement. But it seems to me that you also accumulate the years without becoming older.

MARQUIS. Oh, I grew old so fast that I haven't changed for the last twenty years. [*Sitting down near the table.*] But let's speak of you, comrade. What has become of you? Have you at last a serious position?

GIBOYER. [*Sitting down also.*] Very serious. I am employed by an undertaker in Lyons.

MARQUIS. An undertaker?

GIBOYER. Yes, in the daytime; evenings, I am ticket-taker at the Celestin theatre. I shall not expatiate upon this very philosophical contrast.

MARQUIS. Thanks, and what is your position with the undertaker?

GIBOYER. Director. It is I who say to the guests with a pleasant smile: "Gentlemen, when you are ready."

MARQUIS. Allow me to wonder that, with your talent, you did not achieve something better.

GIBOYER. It is easy for you to talk. Achieving success was incompatible with the charges that always weighed upon me; first my father, then Maximilien.

MARQUIS. Then why the dickens do you amuse yourself gathering orphans?

GIBOYER. How can I tell you—the Montyon prize prevented me from going to sleep. [*Arising.*] You

allow me, don't you? I can't keep still. And besides, at that time, I had a good position on Vernouillet's paper; I had at last my foot in the stirrup; but the horse died under me and I fell back on the pavement just when I had to pay the second quarter for the little fellow in college. I had to find another position at once. They offered me the management of the "Radical"; I accepted it. You know what the manager of a paper was then; he was the goat, the man who served time. Funny profession, but well paid; four thousand francs, with food and lodging at the expense of the government, eight months out of twelve. I was putting money by. Unfortunately, '48 came and the career of doing time was closed for me.

MARQUIS. Why didn't you offer your services to the "Republic"?

GIBOYER. She refused them.

MARQUIS. She was too particular.

GIBOYER. I was frantic, not because of myself, I never had any trouble earning enough to buy a smoke—but because of the child whose education I would have to stop. It was then that I thought of you and appealed to you.

MARQUIS. Do you remember the time when you cursed the cruel benefit of education? Who would have told me then that you would ask me one day to saddle a poor child with it?

GIBOYER. I confess that before I sent him to college, I had more than one talk with my pillow. My example was not encouraging. But then the analogy in our situation was only apparent; the family of a janitor needs more than one generation to make its way into society. All the rushes are alike; the first assailants remain in the ditch and make a bridge with their bodies for the followers. I belonged to

the sacrificed generation; it would have been too stupid if no one had profited by the sacrifice.

MARQUIS. And on my side, I was glad to endow my country with one more socialist. But coming back to your case, you had no more burdens then—that was the time to—

GIBOYER. That's what I thought, but you'll see my luck. The papers didn't pay, there were too many of them; so I conceived the idea of writing a series of contemporary biographies.

MARQUIS. I read a few of them; they were very spicy.

GIBOYER. Too spicy! I had been foolish enough to play the fool-killer in all earnestness. What a fool! I wrote scathingly—duels, lawsuits, fines, and everything. My frightened editor stopped the publication and when I wished to return to journalism, I found all doors barred through the powerful enmities which my little campaign had brought me. And Maximilien was just going to leave college; I wanted him to have a sterling education; I couldn't hesitate or pout about it, I took off my coat and dived.

MARQUIS. Dived? What do you mean by that?

GIBOYER. You know only the professions that are on the water level; but under the surface there are fifty slimy industries which you do not suspect. What would you say if I told you that I ran an agency for wet nurses! All that doesn't feed a man any too well, but, thank goodness, I have the stomach of an ostrich. I ate pickled cow in the good days and pebbles in the bad days, and Maximilien is a Ph. D., LL. D., and the rest! He traveled like the scion of a noble house! And he is as honorable—as if it didn't cost anything!

MARQUIS. You have a certain interest in the young man.

GIBOYER. He is my only relative, and then when one gets old one is likely to ride a hobby; mine is to make of Maximilien what I wasn't able to be myself—an honorable and honored man. It pleases me to be the manure from which a lily grows. This hobby is just as good as collecting tobacco boxes.

MARQUIS. I admit that, but why did you not acknowledge this son, whom you adore?

GIBOYER. What son?

MARQUIS. [*Rising.*] You sly fox! I know your story as well as you do. Maximilien was born in 1837, his mother was a newspaper folder, called Adele Gerard, you are his father. Am I correctly informed?

GIBOYER. Yes.

MARQUIS. You quickly lost sight of mother and child until November, 1845, when the poor girl died.

GIBOYER. How do you know?

MARQUIS. We have our own police, my dear fellow—Adele Gerard had written a pathetic letter to you, in which she left Maximilien to your care; you hastened to her deathbed, you wanted to recognize the child through a marriage *in extremis*; but the mother died before the ceremony. And then, through a strange whim which I would like you to explain to me, you took care of the orphan but refused to recognize him. Why?

GIBOYER. Marquis, I have written a book which is a résumé of all my experience and all my ideas. I believe it is a beautiful and true book, I am proud of it, it puts me on better terms with myself; and yet, I shall not publish it under my name for fear that my name may harm it.

MARQUIS. Yes, it might be prudent.

GIBOYER. Well, if I do not sign my book, how can I sign my son? I rejoice every day that death did

not give me time to tie the chain and ball of his filiation to his ankle.

MARQUIS. Does he know that you are his father?

GIBOYER. What would be the good? If he did not keep the secret, he would harm himself; if he kept it, it would wound me deeply. Besides, why put into his soul this cause of timidity or impudence? What would I gain by it? Don't you see that he would less easily forgive me my faults if he had to blush for them because they were ancestral blemishes?

MARQUIS. Do you know, my dear fellow, that you have developed a wonderful delicacy of feeling since I saw you last?

GIBOYER. They'll develop in you when you are a father.

MARQUIS. Master Giboyer, you forget yourself.

GIBOYER. I hit back, that's all, Marquis. Now, let's come to the point, for I do not suppose that you asked me all this through idle curiosity.

MARQUIS. And what do you suppose, pray?

GIBOYER. That before offering me a position of trust, you wanted to make sure whether my secret was a sufficient guarantee. Is it?

MARQUIS. Yes.

GIBOYER. Then speak.

MARQUIS. [*Sitting down.*] How much do your two positions bring you in?

GIBOYER. Together, eighteen hundred francs. But don't take that figure for a basis for your offer. You forgot to ask me what I came to Paris for. Now, it happens that I come to make arrangement with an American society, which is starting a newspaper in the United States, and offers me twelve thousand francs to run it. Everybody did not forget me.

MARQUIS. I proved that. So you know English?

GIBOYER. I invented the Boyerson method.

MARQUIS. And you consent to expatriate yourself?

GIBOYER. Certainly; unless you offer me the same advantages, in which case I'll give you the preference.

MARQUIS. Won't you make a sacrifice in order to remain near Maximilien?

GIBOYER. It would be a sacrifice at his expense; for, if I go over there, I'll bring him back after six years an income of three thousand francs, that is to say, independence.

MARQUIS. And if my friends and I should undertake to push him along? I am still interested in him. I have already procured him the position of secretary to M. Marechal.

GIBOYER. Much good that does him!

MARQUIS. Well, there is a good lady there, still youthful, who takes great interest in young people and is very successful in getting positions for them. All of Maximilien's predecessors have good positions.

GIBOYER. Many thanks. But the place I have in view for him is not among you, and I am the only one who can give it to him.

MARQUIS. What place? and among whom?

GIBOYER. I'll answer no more questions, Marquis.

MARQUIS. [*Arising.*] I see—'tis he who will sign your book? Good! So you transfuse into his life the quintessence of your own; you leave yourself to him as an heirloom. Bravo! you practice paternity after the fashion of the pelican.

GIBOYER. You are leaving the question, Marquis; let's come back to it, please. Here is my last word: I want the same salary Deodat had.

MARQUIS. And who told you?

GIBOYER. You don't intend to enroll me in your police, do you? It is done by bigger fellows than I

am. Then, in what may I serve you, except in taking the place of your virtuoso? You thought that shame would not stop me, and you were right. My conscience has no right to be prudish. But if you thought you would get me for a piece of bread, you were mistaken. You need me more than I need you.

MARQUIS. That's self-conceit.

GIBOYER. No, Marquis. You might perhaps find a literary scamp as capable as I am of emptying a poisoned inkstand upon anyone; but the inconvenience of this sort of auxiliaries is that you are never sure that you hold them. Now, you have got me. That is what enables me to make my own conditions.

MARQUIS. This lopsided reasoning seems unanswerable to me. Deodat had a thousand francs a month; the committee wished to economize on that, but I shall bring your reasons before them.

GIBOYER. Perhaps it won't make up its mind without a sample. Do you want me to fake up before this evening an editorial like the other's?

MARQUIS. Have you got his style down?

GIBOYER. Sure! To make use of it in defining it, it consists in doing the freethinker and taking a fall out of the philosopher, in a word, in fencing and boxing before the Holy Arch. It is a mixture of Bourdaloue and of Turlupin; it is joking employed in the defence of holy things. The *Dies irae* played on a penny whistle!

MARQUIS. Bravo! Turn those claws against our adversaries and everything will be well. Tell me, do you feel capable of writing a speech for the Chamber?

GIBOYER. Yes, indeed; I also keep eloquence on tap; but that's paid for extra.

MARQUIS. Of course. And what pseudonym will you take? For you cannot serve us under your name.

GIBOYER. That's evident, and it suits me in every way. The child won't know that it is I, and besides I had pressed into his glass all the juice of the former Giboyer; let's pass on to another one. Besides, I am sick of the poor fool who never succeeded in anything, who with his talent couldn't become a man of letters, nor an honest man with his virtues. Let's shed our skin, and long life to M. de Boyergi.

MARQUIS. The anagram of your name! Fine! Tomorrow evening, I shall introduce you to your backers. [*Giving him a banknote.*] That's for the first outlay; don't let me recognize you when I see you again.

GIBOYER. Leave that to me. I have been assistant stage director in a Marseilles theatre.

MARQUIS. Till tomorrow. [*Exit Giboyer.*] Oui! What a day!

DUBOIS. [*Entering.*] The Marquis' horse is saddled.

MARQUIS. All right. [*Taking his hat and gloves.*] Strange fellow—it's the courtezan who earns her daughter's dowry.

[CURTAIN.]

ACT 2.

[A small parlor in M. Marechal's house. Two doors—right and left. Chimney at the back. To the right, an embroidery frame, Madame Marechal is seated near the frame and embroiders. Maximilien, seated near her on a stool, is reading to her.]

MAXIMILIEN. *[Reading.]*

After, alone before God,
I had wept all my tears,
I wished upon the spots so full of sad charms,
To cast a last glance before I died,
And I spent the evening visiting them again.
Oh, how soon . . .

MME. MARECHAL. I am afraid you will tire yourself, M. Maximilien.

MAXIMILIEN. No, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. You must think I am abusing your kindness.

MAXIMILIEN. I am only too glad when my occupation as a reader fills the void of my occupation as secretary. I haven't done a stroke of work since I have been employed by M. Marechal.

MME. MARECHAL. You read like an angel.

MAXIMILIEN. You are too indulgent.

MME. MARECHAL. By the way you read verses, one feels that you love them—I adore them. Perhaps you have written some?

MAXIMILIEN. I did, and they were bad enough not to tempt me to try again.

MME. MARECHAL. It seems to me that, had I been a man, I would have been a poet—a poet or a soldier. Women are much to be pitied, I assure you. They are forbidden to do anything, they are even forbidden to give a form to their dreams.

MAXIMILIEN. Poor women! [*Aside.*] What astonishes me is that there are some left. [*Aloud.*] Do you wish me to go on?

MME. MARECHAL. If you are not tired reading, I shall never grow tired of listening.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Reading.*]

Oh, how soon summers and ice
Had made our traces disappear from the vale!
How soon on these paths, our feet knew so well.
Earth had forgotten us!

MME. MARECHAL. You were very young when you lost your mother?

MAXIMILIEN. I was eight years old. [*Reading.*]

"Vegetation like a sea of plants"

MME. MARECHAL. And you never knew your father?

MAXIMILIEN. Never. [*Reading.*]

"Had covered all with its climbing waves.
The vine and the thorn . . ."

MME. MARECHAL. Poor young man! Alone in the world at eight years of age! What courage you must have had.

MAXIMILIEN. None at all, Madame. No one had an easier life than I, thanks to the divinely kind man who took care of me.

MME. MARECHAL. A relative of yours, I believe?

MAXIMILIEN. A cousin in the tenth or eleventh degree; but his benefactions have made our relationship so much closer that, on calling him uncle, I am still cheating him. He had no children, and you might say that he adopted me.

MME. MARECHAL. I understand that, for I have no children either! I would be happy to find someone for whom I would be a mother.

MAXIMILIEN. But it seems to me that you have—your step-daughter?

MME. MARECHAL. Fernande? Yes—but I would like a son. A son's love must be more tender. Poor Fernande! I cannot be angry with her, her coolness towards me is fidelity to a grave.

MAXIMILIEN. I thought she had lost her mother while still in the cradle.

MME. MARECHAL. Oh, not at all! She was three years old, and among us women, sensibility is so precocious!

MAXIMILIEN. Mademoiselle Fernande must have worn hers out before she got her first teeth.

MME. MARECHAL. She doesn't seem very open-hearted to you?

MAXIMILIEN. No, indeed.

MME. MARECHAL. She is a little savage, who brought herself up alone. Perhaps she is a little proud; but how can that be helped, being a rich heiress?

MAXIMILIEN. Excuse me, Madame; one needn't be rich to be proud; it is a virtue; but Mademoiselle Fernande is not proud, she is haughty.

MME. MARECHAL. Have you had any reasons to complain?—

MAXIMILIEN. To complain, no, for I do not care; but really, Mademoiselle Fernande displays on my behalf a superfluity of indifference which is quite useless. I keep myself in my place and haven't the slightest desire to be set back into it. She makes a great display of coolness.

MME. MARECHAL. Perhaps it is in your interest; she might fear—

MAXIMILIEN. What?

MME. MARECHAL. You are young, she is handsome—

MAXIMILIEN. And she has read novels in which the poor secretary falls in love with the Baron's

daughter? But let her reassure herself, I am not in any danger. Between us, there is a river of ice.

MME. MARECHAL. And this river is?

MAXIMILIEN. Her dowry! with which she would certainly believe me to be in love. Rich young girls—brr! The swish of their skirts resembles the crumpling of bank bills; and in their beautiful eyes, I read only one thing: "The law punishes the counterfeiter."

MME. MARECHAL. I like you to have those ideas. I have judged you correctly. Alas, we must confess it, these fine feelings are found only in men brought up in the school of adversity.

MAXIMILIEN. But, Madame, that is the only teacher I never had, thanks to my dear protector.

MME. MARECHAL. Do not blush because you have been poor, M. Maximilien; at least, not before me.

MAXIMILIEN. Not before you, Madame, nor before anyone else. But really, if I have known poverty, it was at an age when one does not understand, and I do not remember it. There is only one disagreeable impression connected with my childhood, the impression of being cold: and at that, as I saw my little comrades with chapped hands, I would have been humiliated if mine hadn't been. [*Smiling.*] They were.

MME. MARECHAL. It becomes a man to joke over his trials; gaiety is one of the most virile forms of courage.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] She sticks to it.

MME. MARECHAL. If I had a son, I would like him smiling in his strength, like you,—and I would ask you to be his friend,—his mentor rather, for he would still be very young.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] She must have married late.

MME. MARECHAL. I wish you would like me, M. Maximilien.

MAXIMILIEN. Certainly, Madame. [*Fernande opens the door, and starts to go out again.*]

MME. MARECHAL. Come in, my dear; you are not in the way. M. Maximilien was kind enough to read to me;—if beautiful verses do not frighten you, sit down at your frame and listen.

FERNANDE. Willingly, Madame. [*She opens her tapestry frame and sits down.*]

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside, and designating Mme. Marechal.*] How she does look at me! Could it be possible that—? For shame!

MME. MARECHAL. [*Going to Fernande.*] This square is very pretty; try not to lose it, as you lost the last one.

FERNANDE. [*Working.*] I suppose I'll find it again.

MME. MARECHAL. Some day when no one will need it.

FERNANDE. Probably.

MME. MARECHAL. You can't get out of my head that you said it was lost in order not to show it to Madame Matheus.

FERNANDE. And why shouldn't I have shown it?

MME. MARECHAL. Because there were three defects in it, I think.

FERNANDE. What were you reading?

MME. MARECHAL. "Jocelyn." Will you begin again, M. Maximilien?

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] She has a peculiar way of looking at people. [*Reading.*]

"The vine and the thorn stopped every step;
The grass I trampled knew me not;
The lake, soiled by the fallen leaves,
Cast them back on its heavy waves.
Nothing . . . "

MME. MARECHAL. What are you looking for? I can't listen when anyone moves around me.

FERNANDE. I can't find my blue skein.

MME. MARECHAL. You lose everything.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Rising.*] Will you allow me, Mademoiselle?

FERNANDE. [*Dryly.*] Don't disturb yourself, sir; I have it.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Picking up the skein; aside.*] Why, so have I! [*He puts it on the mantelpiece.*] The minx!

[*Enter Marechal with a manuscript in his hand.*]

MARECHAL. I was looking for you, M. Gerard. Good morning, Fernande. [*She offers him her forehead without leaving her work; he kisses her.*] Here is work for you, my young friend.

MAXIMILIEN. So much the better. I was complaining of my uselessness.

MARECHAL. Henceforth, you shall not be idle, I assure you.

FERNANDE. Why, what's the matter?

MARECHAL. What's the matter? Haven't you noticed, for two or three days, that I have been looking preoccupied?

FERNANDE. No.

MARECHAL. That's strange! I thought I did,—anyone would. I have just written a speech which will be a cannon shot.

FERNANDE. [*Arising and going to her father.*] A speech? You are going to speak?

MARECHAL. I must.

FERNANDE. Oh, father, speech is silver, but silence is golden—

MARECHAL. There are circumstances, daughter, there are positions in which silence is a dereliction, not to say a betrayal—isn't that so, Aglae?

MME. MARECHAL. Undoubtedly; your father owes something to his party, to his friends and, I daresay, to his alliance with a la Vertpilliere.

FERNANDE. It is you, Madame, who urge him on?

MME. MARECHAL. Are you sorry to see him emerge from his obscurity?

FERNANDE. His quiet life did not keep my vanity on edge,—his humble name was sufficient for me who love it. [*To Marechal.*] Why this ambition? I shall not live on the day you ascend this rostrum.

MARECHAL. It isn't ambition, daughter, it's duty! Do not try to shake my resolution; it would be in vain. Honor speaks, it must be listened to. [*Fernande goes back to her tapestry.*] My dear Gerard, you are going to do me the pleasure of copying over my scribble, in your finest hand; for I couldn't read it myself.

FERNANDE. Oh, you're going to read?

MAXIMILIEN. I'll go to work at once.

MARECHAL. Glance over it first to see if you can read it. [*To Fernande.*] Yes, I shall read it. It's not so troublesome? What a distrustful girl? I shall read my first speech; as to the second, we'll see. [*Tapping her cheek.*] So we think that father is an old back number?

[*Fernande kisses his hand. Maximilien sits down in a corner and glances over the manuscript.*]

A SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Baroness Pfeffers.

[*Enter the Baroness, she has her tapestry rolled in her muff.*]

MME. MARECHAL. Ah, Baroness.

BARONESS. This is not your day, Madame; but I didn't wish to pass your door without knocking, although I still hope to see you at my house tomorrow evening.

MARECHAL. We'll go if we have to go on our heads!

BARONESS. And you are well, orator?

MARECHAL. And ready for the fray, Madame.

BARONESS. For a triumph! I also had a little favor to ask of you, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. I regret that it is a little one.

BARONESS. We are both patronesses of the mission for the little Chinese; I have disposed of all my tickets and am asked for more. Can you let me have about ten?

MARECHAL. They are not clamoring for her tickets as they do for yours, Baroness.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] The brute. [*Aloud.*] I will see if I have any left.

BARONESS. Must you disturb yourself? Send them to me.

MME. MARECHAL. No, I prefer to give them to you at once. It is surer: they might get them from me.

MARECHAL. [*In a low voice.*] You still have all of them.

MME. MARECHAL. [*In a low voice.*] You never say anything but unpleasant things. [*Exit.*]

BARONESS. [*Drawing near Fernande's frame.*] Oh, you also belong to the Tabernacle society, Mademoiselle?

FERNANDE. No, Madame.

BARONESS. Is not what you are doing there a square for the carpet of the faithful?

FERNANDE. It's anything you please.

BARONESS. And yet, there is the regulation border; see. [*She unrolls the tapestry she takes from her muff.*]

FERNANDE. [*Aside.*] Well.

MARECHAL. Is that your work? It's charming!

FERNANDE. It's very pretty! It must have cost you a great deal of time, didn't it?

BARONESS. No, indeed.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Returning.*] I have only nine left; here they are.

MARECHAL. [*Showing her the Baroness' tapestry.*] Look, my dear.

MME. MARECHAL. [*To Fernande.*] Oh, you found it again?

MARECHAL. What's that you say?

MME. MARECHAL. Why, yes, it's the square that Fernande thought she had lost.

MARECHAL. You're dreaming, my dear.

MME. MARECHAL. It's easy to recognize it. Here are the three defects. Isn't that so, Fernande?

FERNANDE. Why, so it is.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] Ah!

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] There now!

MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] Heavens, what a break!

BARONESS. [*Threatening Fernande with her finger.*] Oh, you roguish girl, you had recognized your work, and were making fun of me by asking me if it took a great deal of my time!

FERNANDE. I wanted to compel you to admit that your benevolence did not give you leisure to embroider.

MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] The child is witty enough when need be.

MME. MARECHAL. Tell me what's going on, please.

BARONESS. Who is the society woman who does her own tapestry and wears her own hair? These deceits are so generally admitted that when a false braid becomes loose in the presence of our friends, we pin it back with a smile. [*She rolls back her square.*] And that's what I'm doing.

MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] Charming! Adorable! One could not be more graceful!

BARONESS. What astonishes me in this adventure

is not that my tapestry is not my work, since I buy it, but that it should be yours, Mademoiselle.

MARECHAL. Yes, by the way, how did it come to be sold to you?

MME. MARECHAL. [*To Fernande.*] I always suspected the faithfulness of your chambermaid.

FERNANDE. Poor Jeannette, she is incapable of—

MME. MARECHAL. It is not the first time that your work has been lost; it is probable that she makes a business of it.

BARONESS. And that the poor old woman from whom we buy them is a receiver of stolen goods. Another deception of charity.

MARECHAL. That's very serious. Call Jeannette; I want to question her.

FERNANDE. No, father, I shall explain this mystery to you later.

MME. MARECHAL. Why not right away?

MARECHAL. Send for Jeannette.

FERNANDE. [*Blushing deeply.*] Well, since you compel me, I must tell you that it is I who give these trifles to old Hardouin.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] So!

MME. MARECHAL. That's no reason for blushing as you do.

BARONESS. Why was she compelled to show her beautiful soul?

FERNANDE. Such things are ridiculous when they are not kept secret.

MME. MARECHAL. That's romantic charity.

MARECHAL. Haven't you money enough for your charities?

FERNANDE. [*With tears in her eyes.*] All poor people do not accept charity. That old woman is proud, she is accustomed to make her living from her needlework; her sight is failing her, I help out

her eyes, that's all. There is nothing romantic in that, and really I do not understand why you should tease me about it.

MARECHAL. Come, calm yourself, there is no harm done.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Half aloud.*] I should say not.

MARECHAL. Beg your pardon.

MAXIMILIEN. I can read this readily; I'll go to work on it. [*Exit.*]

BARONESS. Is that your secretary? Very distinguished looking. Goodbye, my dear Madame. I'm very sorry to have been the cause of some annoyance for Mademoiselle Fernande. I'm going to carry the cause of it to the church of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, and you may rest assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall not reveal your share in the collaboration.

A SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Count d'Outreville. [*Enter Count.*]

MARECHAL. Good morning, Count.

COUNT. [*Without seeing the Baroness.*] How are the ladies? Their appearance answers for them. My cousin told me to meet him here.

MARECHAL. Condorier?

COUNT. But I see that in my eagerness I came early.

MME. MARECHAL. Very gracious of you, Count.

BARONESS. Goodbye, my dear Madame.

COUNT. Oh, I beg your pardon, Baroness, I had not seen you.

BARONESS. I thought that you did not recognize me.

COUNT. [*Drawing near the mantelpiece.*] How can you believe that after having seen you once—?

BARONESS. I believe it the more that in Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin you were not twenty chairs away from me and did not salute me.

COUNT. If I could have thought that you did me the honor of recognizing me—

BARONESS. Oh, you care very little for whatever honor I may do you. I did you the honor of inviting you to call on me and you did not do it. Do I frighten you?

COUNT. Oh, no.

BARONESS. Well, try to deserve forgiveness.

A SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Marquis d'Auberive!

BARONESS. [*To the Marquis.*] This time I'll run away; I would have too many reasons to scold you, Marquis.

MARQUIS. And why so, my dear Madame?

BARONESS. Your cousin will tell you—I'll see you tomorrow, my dear Madame, and you also, my dear. [*Exit.*]

COUNT. [*Aside.*] She did recognize me.

MARECHAL. What grace! What ease of manners! She's at home everywhere.

FERNANDE. Yes, it is we who seem to be paying a visit.

MARQUIS. What I admire in her, especially, is her tact. She understood that I had to talk to you about various matters and vacated. My dear Fernande, will you go and see if she has left—

FERNANDE. And do not come back to tell us about it.

MARQUIS. It would be useless. [*Exit Fernande.*]

MME. MARECHAL. Am I also in the way?

MARQUIS. On the contrary; I depend on you to help me, but let's sit down. [*They sit down.*] Madame, you have never shared the objection my friend Marechal has, to marrying Fernande to a nobleman.

MME. MARECHAL. I haven't the same motives he has for fearing an aristocratic alliance; that would not be going out of my sphere, but returning to it.

MARECHAL. This objection of which you speak was not a real objection, it was rather—how should I say?—exaggerated modesty.

MARQUIS. Which I might have understood up to a certain point until a week ago; but to-day, there is not a nobleman who would not be honored by an alliance with you; and the proof of it is, that I come to ask for the hand of my ward in behalf of Count d'Outreville, the sole heir to my property and name.

MARECHAL. Is that possible? What, Marquis, you would consent?

MME. MARECHAL. [*Low to her husband.*] Have some dignity, sir. [*Aloud.*] We are very sensible, Marquis, to the request which you are willing to make; but we must, before everything else, consult the heart of our dear Fernande.

MARECHAL. That's so.

MARQUIS. Quite right, Madame; but could it not be consulted right away? Would you have any objection to my cousin presenting his request to Fernande in person?

MARECHAL. None, whatsoever, Marquis, none whatsoever.

MME. MARECHAL. [*In a low voice.*] Why, you throw us at their heads.

MARQUIS. And you, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. I think that it is quite unconventional.

MARQUIS. I know it, but cannot etiquette take pity on the impatience of this young man? [*In a low voice to the Count.*] Speak up.

COUNT. [*Coldly.*] I beg of you, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. Since everyone insists.

MARECHAL. Go on! Send us Fernande, my dear. [*In a low voice.*] And tell her about it.

MME. MARECHAL. Once more, I find all this very swift—but I yield. [*Exit.*]

MARECHAL. Now that my wife is gone, let me tell you frankly, my dear Marquis, how glad and proud I am of your proposed alliance.

COUNT. I am the one to be congratulated, sir.

MARECHAL. I intended giving her eight hundred thousand francs as a dowry; I'll give her a round million.

COUNT. I beg of you, sir, let us not speak of these contemptible things.

MARQUIS. On the contrary, let's speak of them! For the time being, my cousin has an income of only about ten thousand francs; but I have an income of seventy thousand, which I shall leave him—as late as possible.

MARECHAL. By Jove, there is a hundred thousand more a year that I shall offer him on the day of my funeral.

MARQUIS. My grand—your grandchildren, I mean, will be well off.

MARECHAL. Why correct yourself, my dear Conductor? Say, our grandchildren! Aren't they going to bear your name? Zounds, Marquis, we are related now,—at least on the women's side.

MARQUIS. [*Unthinkingly.*] We were before—through our opinions.

MARECHAL. But what are they doing out there? I'll wager that Madame Marechal keeps us waiting for sheer dignity.

MARQUIS. Go and wake them up: I'll meet you.

MARECHAL. I will. [*Stops at the door and looks at the Count.*] What a fine looking man! [*Exit.*]

MARQUIS. See here, my fine fellow, you go to the altar like a whipped dog. I don't want to be the

cause of your unhappiness. If the bride displeases you, you must say so.

COUNT. She does not displease me, but—

MARQUIS. Speak up, speak up, don't be afraid! I am not hard up for an heir. *Uno avulso non deficit alter*—to speak your own language, I'll make up with another branch—with the Valtravers. I am not on speaking terms with them, but it will be easy to make that up—Aureus, of course!

COUNT. In Heaven's name, cousin, do not lose your temper.

MARQUIS. I'm not losing my temper, sir. I am putting you at ease. It is clear that you are not enthusiastic over this marriage.

COUNT. Yes, yes, Cousin, I am.

MARQUIS. Perhaps you don't find Fernande a fine enough girl! Try to do as well.

COUNT. But if, in spite of my good will, I was unfortunate enough not to please her?

MARQUIS. I would be sorry for you; but I would summon a Valtraver. Now, you're warned.

COUNT. Heavens, what a situation!

[*Fernande appears in the door to the left.*]

MARQUIS. [*Low voice.*] Here she is, I leave you.

COUNT. [*In a low voice.*] But, I don't know where to begin.

MARQUIS. [*In a low voice.*] Nothing hard in that! "Mademoiselle, I have your parents' permission, but it is your own consent I want." [*To Fernande.*] You thought you would find your step-mother here, my dear child, but she and your father have abandoned us, and I am going to ask them why. [*Exit.*]

COUNT. [*Aside.*] The head is fine, but how different from the divine Pfeffers! And if she refuses

me, I am ruined. [*Aloud.*] Mademoiselle, have you been told why?

FERNANDE. Yes, sir.

COUNT. I have your parents' consent, but it is your own consent which I want. This, I believe, is a sentiment of which you cannot disapprove.

FERNANDE. It is a delicate and prudent sentiment; for I am not of those who are married without being consulted. We do not know each other; suppose that in order to become acquainted, we speak with entire frankness?

COUNT. Willingly, Mademoiselle; frankness is my chief quality.

FERNANDE. So much the better; it is the quality I esteem above all others. Well, why do you want to marry me?

COUNT. Why, because I was not able to see you without—

FERNANDE. I beg your pardon, you forget our agreement already. We have met three times, we have exchanged a couple of phrases, and I haven't enough vanity to believe that that was sufficient to turn your head.

COUNT. You do not do yourself justice, Mademoiselle.

FERNANDE. How hard it is for a man to be sincere! I would add, to help you out, that if you married me on account of love, I would believe it my duty to refuse; for there would be between us an inequality of feelings which would make you very unhappy if your soul has any delicacy.

COUNT. Well,—if I do not feel what the world calls love, believe me, when I tell you, that there is in me, all the sentiments which a husband owes to his wife.

FERNANDE. Good! But these sentiments are not

sufficiently strong to urge a nobleman to a mesalliance. So you must have a particular reason. I have no doubt it is perfectly honorable, and if I care about knowing it, it is only that there may be no shadow of suspicion in the estimation I wish to make of my husband.—You hesitate to answer?

COUNT. No, Mademoiselle. I wish to marry you through deference to my cousin's wishes—a deference which is very pleasing to me, I assure you.

FERNANDE. I ought to have suspected that: since he does not oppose this mesalliance, it is because he orders it.

COUNT. He has for you an affection which—

FERNANDE. He is alone in the world, I am his ward, and his heart clings to this bond, slight as it may be. Go and tell him, sir, that I shall do as he wishes.

COUNT. How grateful I am, Mademoiselle!

FERNANDE. You owe me no gratitude; I accept a name honorably offered—and I promise you to bear it worthily.

COUNT. And I assure you that, notwithstanding—but you're right; I will go and gladden my cousin with this happy news. [*Exit.*]

FERNANDE. [*After a pause.*] After all, he will do as well as another! To leave this house, that's the chief thing—poor father!

MAXIMILIEN. [*Entering with manuscript in his hand.*] I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, I thought I would find your father here.

FERNANDE. [*Going to sit down at her frame.*] I believe he is in the parlor; but I doubt whether you can speak to him; he is busy.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] Never mind, I'll leave the word blank—peculiar girl! [*Puts his manuscript on the mantelpiece, picks up the skein of wool and*

comes down to Fernande.] Here is your blue skein, Mademoiselle.—What have I done to you? And why do you treat me so harshly? As long as I was able to consider you as a parlor butterfly, I thought myself far above your scorn and did not care about it; but she who lends her eyes to old Hardouin does not scorn anyone's poverty, and I come to ask you frankly why I have lost your esteem?

FERNANDE. [*Without raising her eyes from her work.*] I'm sorry that you should be shocked by my behavior toward you. It is the same I maintained toward your predecessors, and it did not harm their advancement.

MAXIMILIEN. Is that all you have to answer me?

FERNANDE. That's all.

MAXIMILIEN. Really, Mademoiselle, were I the most contemptible of men, you would not treat me otherwise.

FERNANDE. [*Rising.*] Good-bye, sir.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Stepping between her and the door.*] No, Mademoiselle, no! You shall not leave me thus. I read profound contempt in your eyes. I demand now the explanation I was asking for.

FERNANDE. [*Haughtily.*] You know full well that I cannot give it to you.

MAXIMILIEN. I swear to you that I do not know anything, that I do not understand, except this: that my honor is suspected. Answer me, I beg of you. Who slandered me? Of what am I accused?

FERNANDE. Of nothing, sir; let us stop this, I pray.

MAXIMILIEN. Come, Mademoiselle, you are kind, you use your heart in your charitable work; take pity on my suspense. What I hold dearest is at stake.

FERNANDE. What do you mean by this comedy?

Do you hope to make me tell what I blush to know?
Let me pass!

MAXIMILIEN. You do not say a word that is not a stab! On my bended knee, I entreat you.

FERNANDE. Keep that for—

MAXIMILIEN. For whom?

FERNANDE. For your career. [*She passes him.*]

MAXIMILIEN. Ah, I understand! [*Fernande stops on the threshold.*] There were contemptible men here before me—and you judge me like them! It will not take me long to justify myself, and your suspicion will cause you to lower your eyes, and not I. I pity you—I pity you more than you insulted me, poor young girl, who have lost the blessed ignorance of evil.

[*Enter Marechal and the Marquis.*]

MARECHAL. Well, M. Gerard, is that the way you do your work?

MAXIMILIEN. I was requesting Mademoiselle to transmit to you a communication somewhat trying to me: my resignation.

MARECHAL. What's that! Your resignation? I don't accept it! You leave me in the lurch just when I need you.

MARQUIS. You can't do that, my dear fellow.

MAXIMILIEN. I did not express myself correctly, sir. I am not a man to repay your kindness by leaving you in the lurch. Only I wanted to request you to look for my successor. I shall stay until you have found him.

MARECHAL. It's very annoying! I was getting accustomed to you. I hate new faces.

MARQUIS. What notion has gotten into your head?

MARECHAL. Do they offer you a better place?

MAXIMILIEN. No, sir, if I leave your service, it

is to work for myself. I am accustomed to depend upon my own work, and I feel incapable of enduring constraint.

MARECHAL. Your work! But confound it, you confessed to me that before entering my service you were doing literary hack work at thirty francs a page, small text.

MAXIMILIEN. Small text, yes, sir.

MARECHAL. And you want to start that starvation business again?

FERNANDE. [*Aside.*] I took his bread away from him.

MARECHAL. Why, this is absurd.

MAXIMILIEN. Remember the fable of the wolf and the dog.

MARECHAL. Are you treated like a dog here? Any lack of consideration?

MAXIMILIEN. On the contrary, sir; but, through a peculiarity of my mind, which I am not able to control, every care taken here to make me forget the inferiority of my position only serves to recall it to my mind. It is unjust and ridiculous, I know it. I accuse only myself, but I cannot stand it, and I shall leave. [*Exit Fernande.*]

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] There is something else beneath that.

MARECHAL. You're too proud! What do you want me to do? I can't keep you by force.

MARQUIS. [*In a low voice to Marechal.*] Let me speak to him.

MARECHAL. Do. [*Exit at right.*]

MARQUIS. Now, my dear fellow, what's up?

MAXIMILIEN. You should have warned me, Marquis, that I came here to be Madame Marechal's swain.

MARQUIS. There's the rub, ah? The good dame

is making eyes at you? Reassure yourself: she shall not compel you to leave your cloak in her hands. She is romantic, but platonic. Her hero does not need to share in the romance; she'll do it all. She persuades herself that she is loved, has terrific struggles with herself, and finally triumphs over the imaginary danger by dismissing the seducer after securing a good berth for him. You see that you may remain.

MAXIMILIEN. This excuses Madame Marechal to a certain extent, but not the wretch who exploits her weakness. Should I meet one of my predecessors, I would not salute him, even after your explanation.

MARQUIS. You're proud.

MAXIMILIEN. Do you blame me for it?

MARQUIS. No, indeed.

MAXIMILIEN. By consenting to remain a few days in this intolerable position, I believe I am doing all I owe to you and to M. Marechal. Do not ask me to do more.

MARQUIS. I have nothing to say.

MAXIMILIEN. I'll go back to the library and shall not leave it until the arrival of my successor. [*Exit.*]

MARQUIS. The little bastard deserves to be a nobleman. [*Exit.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT III.

[*Marechal's library—one single door at the back—on the left a desk with its back to the public; center, a little to the right, an armchair and a small table.*]

MARECHAL. [*Alone. Stands behind the armchair as if on the rostrum; on the table near him a glass of water. He takes a drink.*] “And you may rest assured, gentlemen, that the only solid basis in politics and in morals is faith! We must not teach the people the rights of man, but the rights of God; for dangerous truths are not truths. The divine institution of authority is the first and last word of primary instruction.” [*Comes down stage with his manuscript in his hand.*] There, I have got my first part pat. Not without trouble; my memory is as restive as can be. Subordinate faculty, memory! Well, I shall recite it. My speech is magnificent. I would like to know who wrote it, so I could order the next one from him. I don’t know whether it will produce the same effect in the chamber as it did upon me, but it seems irrefutable to me; it makes me stronger in my convictions, it lifts me up! What a beautiful thing eloquence is! I was born to be an orator; I have the voice and the gestures; those are gifts which cannot be acquired. The rest—[*Looking at his manuscript.*—]—can be acquired.—This fellow Gerard doesn’t get through with his breakfast. I’d like to have the end of my speech—I haven’t got too much time to learn it between now and to-morrow. Don’t eat at my table any more if it humiliates you, my dear friend, but don’t rob me of an hour after each meal: my time

is precious. His great love of independence is the need of smoking while he is digesting, that's all! Society is no more possible with the advent of the cigar. Everything is connected: bad manners bring bad morals; and if you look closely, gentlemen, you will see that the road of revolution is strewn with remnants of conventionalities.—Why! I am improvising now!

[*Enter Maximilien.*]

MARECHAL. Well, young man, did you breakfast better at the restaurant than in my house? At any rate, it took longer.

MAXIMILIEN. I have only a few pages more of your speech to copy. I shall be through in an hour.

MARECHAL. Give me what you have done, anyway, so that I can study it.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Taking the sheet from the desk drawer.*] Here you are, sir. I took the liberty of adding a few words necessary to the grammatical construction and which evidently remained at the end of your pen.

MARECHAL. I scribble so rapidly.

MAXIMILIEN. Others were illegible; I put them in according to the sense of the sentence.

MARECHAL. I see with pleasure that you're familiar with the secrets of the language.

MAXIMILIEN. They are not secrets for anyone.

MARECHAL. Aren't they? You're a man of merit, my dear Gerard; frankly, between you and me, what do you think of my speech?

MAXIMILIEN. It disturbs me greatly, sir; it irritates me.

MARECHAL. It irritates you?

MAXIMILIEN. Like all reasoning, against which you have no answer, and yet is refuted by an intimate feeling.

MARECHAL. You admit that there is no answer? That's enough for me.

MAXIMILIEN. The second part especially is very forceful.

MARECHAL. Ah—yes.

MAXIMILIEN. I admit that I must gather my thoughts to be able to defend myself against such sharp attack.

MARECHAL. You delight me. I believe I shall produce a great sensation. I am going to finish learning it by heart, for a read speech is always cold. Bring the end to my room, please, and if you are willing, we'll have a rehearsal during which you will simulate interruptions to accustom my memory to the tumult of the assembly.

MAXIMILIEN. At your service. [*Exit Marechal.*] It is true, I am troubled and irritated. I am troubled because I feel the whole structure of my ideas shaken. But why should I be irritated? Against what? Against the truth? That's too silly! And yet it is so! My reason is following a path which I refuse to follow. It seems to me that it is going over to the enemy—the enemy! Have I any hatred against anyone? No; not even against this young girl,—what a singular product of civilization, this pure brow, these limpid eyes and a wilted soul! And I was on the point of looking upon her as upon an angel, because of the old Hardouin! Ah, Mademoiselle, you pamper poverty, which kneels down and whines, but you insult poverty that stands up silent! Your poor people are your charity playthings! Really, I hate you! [*Enter Madame Marechal with a book in her hand.*] The other one now!

MME. MARECHAL. I bring back “Jocelyn.” [*Maximilien bows, sits down at the desk and begins to*

write. *Madame Marechal puts the book back in the bookcase. A pause.*]

MME. MARECHAL. I haven't seen you since yesterday, M. Maximilien. I have learned through my husband that you are leaving.

MAXIMILIEN. Yes, Madam.

MME. MARECHAL. And is the reason you gave to M. Marechal the real reason?

MAXIMILIEN. Undoubtedly.

MME. MARECHAL. So much the better! I was afraid lest my step-daughter had wounded you in some way.

MAXIMILIEN. No, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. Then you do not go away angry? You will not altogether forget that this house has been yours for a few days? The secretary leaves us, but the friend will come back?

MAXIMILIEN. Certainly, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. I wanted to hear you say this, for I have a true friendship for you, M. Maximilien.

MAXIMILIEN. You are too kind, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. This is not a banal assertion, you may be sure. I hope you will put it to a test some day.

MAXIMILIEN. Never!

MME. MARECHAL. Why never? Does your pride refuse to owe anything to an almost maternal affection?

MAXIMILIEN. Let us forget this impossible maternity, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Lowering her eyes.*] May not I be at least your older sister?

MAXIMILIEN. No, Madame, no more my sister than my mother.

MME. MARECHAL. [*In a weak voice.*] What then?

MAXIMILIEN. Nothing. [*A pause.*]

MME. MARECHAL. Yes, you are right; everything parts us. I was mad to ask you to come back; do not see me any more. I understand now why you leave. You're an honest man. I thank you.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] If she understood! [*Enter Fernande. Maximilien, aside.*] Again. [*He begins to write again.*]

FERNANDE. [*To Madame Marechal.*] I come for a book.

MME. MARECHAL. What book?

FERNANDE. I don't know. I am idling; I would like to read. Advise me, M. Maximilien,—something that might interest me. [*Maximilien rises and goes to the bookcase.—Aside.*] I had hoped to find him alone. [*Maximilien gives her a book, bows and returns to his desk.—Opening the book.*] The directory of nobility. Is that an epigram? I do not deserve it. I have no more pretension to nobility than you have. [*Giving the book to Madame Marechal.*] Here, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. If I have pretensions, my dear, they are well founded.

FERNANDE. I do not doubt it.—Give me something else, M. Maximilien.—What you would give to your sister.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside and rising.*] She also!—Too many relations.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] How gracious she is to him!

A SERVANT. Count d'Outreville asks if the ladies receive.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] Now, they'll leave me alone. [*Sits down at his desk.*]

FERNANDE. Will you go and receive him, Madame?

MME. MARECHAL. He asks to see both of us.

FERNANDE. I do not feel quite myself; will you excuse me?

MME. MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] One would think she wishes to stay alone with Maximilien. [*To the servant.*] Bring the Count here.

COUNT. [*Entering.*] Excuse me, ladies, for calling so early. This letter from M. d'Auberive will explain to you the irregularity of my conduct.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] This young Count seems as sterling—as a game counter.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Reading the letter.*] Your cousin asks me, sir, to guide you in the purchase of the bridal gift.

COUNT. He is himself attending to the publication of the banns.

FERNANDE. Already?

COUNT. He does not wish to give you time to reflect, Mademoiselle.

FERNANDE. This is not polite to you, Count.

COUNT. He realizes my small merit.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] And she marries this parchment? That caps the climax.

MME. MARECHAL. M. d'Auberive makes marriages as Bonaparte made war. I'll put on a shawl and a hat and go with you. [*Aside.*] I am not sorry that Maximilien should learn the news. [*Exit.*]

MAXIMILIEN. [*Aside.*] Am I going to witness their idyl? To witness their idyl like a King Charles?

COUNT. Allow me, Mademoiselle, to take advantage of these few moments. [*Maximilien coughs.*] We are not alone?

FERNANDE. My father's secretary, M. Gerard.

COUNT. I would be delighted to make his acquaintance; be kind enough to introduce him to me.

FERNANDE. [*To Maximilien.*] M. Maximilien,

let me introduce to you Count d'Outreville, my betrothed.

COUNT. [*Aside.*] Why, she is introducing me.

MAXIMILIEN. Sir—

COUNT. Delighted, sir. [*Aside.*] I don't like him. [*A pause.—To Fernande.*] I was told that M. Marechal did not receive. Is he ill?

FERNANDE. He shut himself up in order to work; isn't that right, M. Maximilien?

MAXIMILIEN. [*At his desk.*] Yes, Mademoiselle. [*A pause.*]

COUNT. I spent a charming morning, last Sunday. I heard, at the Madeleine, a musical Mass sung by the singers of your leading theatres. The organ was played by an artiste.

FERNANDE. Do you like music?

COUNT. Yes, indeed. I also noticed with pleasure that the church was heated.

FERNANDE. Yes; our piety loves its ease.

COUNT. It should have it. For that reason, the church was full—in Paris! This recrudescence of public devotion is a consoling spectacle.

FERNANDE. What do you think of it, M. Maximilien?

MAXIMILIEN. I am very glad that it should afford consolation to Monsieur. As for me, I did not need consolation; I am very philosophical.

COUNT. Do you mean by that that you are not a Christian?

MAXIMILIEN. I am one, sir. So much so that I practice forgiveness of offense.

FERNANDE. Forgiveness or disdain?

MAXIMILIEN. Both.

FERNANDE. Without making any difference between repentance and obduracy?

MAXIMILIEN. I'm not particular.

FERNANDE. You are unjust, Monsieur.

MAXIMILIEN. Possibly, Mademoiselle; but you know more than I do about all things.

FERNANDE. [*Arising, with emotion.*] It takes my stepmother a long time; I will hurry her. [*Exit.*]

COUNT. [*Aside.*] There seems to be a pique between them. [*Aloud.*] Have you been long in the house?

MAXIMILIEN. No, and I shall not stay.

COUNT. I regret that, since I enter it.

MAXIMILIEN. Too kind of you.

COUNT. I hope I'm not driving you away?

MAXIMILIEN. How could you?

COUNT. Oh, you know, that's what people say, when somebody leaves as you enter.

MAXIMILIEN. Excuse me; I have just finished some work which M. Marechal is waiting for, and I shall take it to him. [*Bows and leaves.*]

COUNT. Hm! Does my marriage interrupt a little romance? I am more distrustful than I look. A gentleman who does not need to be consoled, practices forgiveness, and leaves his place just when Mademoiselle Fernande is about to marry.—She was as red as a cherry when she left the room, after a word which probably had a double meaning! Hm! I don't like that. I shall speak of it to the Marquis. [*A servant introduces the Baroness.—Aside.*] Heavens, the Baroness!

BARONESS. You, Count? And alone? Why was I brought here?

COUNT. The ladies were here a moment ago, and will return.

BARONESS. Good! And M. Marechal is not to be seen?

COUNT. I am told that he is at work.

BARONESS. Goodness gracious, at what?

COUNT. Probably on his speech.

BARONESS. I thought it was done. That's why I come. I hope that Madame Marechal will help me to force the door which conceals her husband from mortal eyes.

COUNT. I do not doubt it.

BARONESS. Neither do I. [*Aside.*] He is pricelessly candid. [*Aloud and sitting down.*] Heaven has put you in my way three times within a few days. Doesn't it seem to indicate that there is a will which wishes us to become acquainted?

COUNT. It seems like it.

BARONESS. Perhaps something fortunate for our cause will result from our meeting. I feel it will, don't you?

COUNT. It would be very glorious for me, Madame.

BARONESS. You have upon your brow the sign of the elect.

COUNT. You are too kind.

BARONESS. Heaven willingly makes use of pure hands. Celibacy is a great virtue, you know.

COUNT. Alas, I'm going to marry.

BARONESS. Marry?

COUNT. Yes, Madame,—Mademoiselle Fernande.

BARONESS. [*More coldly.*] Salvation may also be achieved by marriage. My compliments, Count. Your intended is charming, and justifies the violence of your passion.

COUNT. The violence?

BARONESS. I thought only a violent passion could excuse—

COUNT. Isn't the political attitude of M. Marechal a sort of nobility? I do not believe I am marrying below my rank when allying myself with our champion.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] Ah, ah, M. d'Auberive! This is good to know. [*Aloud.*] Then this is a marriage of convenience?

COUNT. Yes, Madame. My cousin wishes it.

BARONESS. Very good. I really do not know why I should interfere, and you must find me very indiscreet. Lay it to a sympathy which is perhaps rash; but when I saw you I thought a friend was coming to me. [*Offering him her hand.*] Was I mistaken?

COUNT. Oh, Madame! [*Kisses her hand.*]

BARONESS. [*Pulling back her hand with a smile.*] No, I was not asking you for everyday gallantry. This little woman's hand is worthy of being shaken; verily, you will find that out some day. You are looking at my bracelet?

COUNT. Your?—Yes—

BARONESS. [*Unclasping the bracelet and giving it to him.*] It's rather curious workmanship.

COUNT. Very curious.

BARONESS. Especially the medallion. It contains a lock of my husband's hair.

COUNT. What, this white hair?

BARONESS. My life was austere, Count. At the age of seventeen I married an old man to fulfill the last wishes of my benefactress.

COUNT. Your benefactress?

BARONESS. Orphaned at birth, without fortune, I had been adopted by a distant relative, the dowager Pfeffers, an angelic creature, who brought me up as her daughter. When she felt the end was coming, she called to her bedside her son, Baron Pfeffers, who was then sixty years old, and taking the hand of each of us within her failing hands, she said, "My death will take away your only friend; promise me to unite your two lonelinesses and I shall die happy. Oh, my son, I trust her childhood to your

old age, and your old age to her childhood. It is not a husband I am giving you," she added, turning towards me, "but a father!"

COUNT. [*With great emotion.*] And he was a father to you?

BARONESS. The most respectful of fathers. But I do not know why I mention these remembrances to you—give me back my bracelet.

COUNT. [*Aside.*] She is an angel.

BARONESS. Heavens, how awkward one is with one hand! Come to my rescue, Count! [*She offers her arm to the Count, who tries to fasten the bracelet.*] You are not more clever than I am. Let us see if we can do it with three hands. [*She helps the Count. Their eyes meet, Count turns his eyes away. Aside.*] Poor fellow! Let anyone tell him stories about me now, he'll have a fine reception. [*Aloud.*] Shall you accompany your betrothed to my house this evening?

COUNT. My betrothed?

BARONESS. I want you to—I have never been happy, but I love other people's happiness. The beginning of pure love in a young soul must be charming. I am sure Mademoiselle Fernande adores you.

COUNT. If she loves anyone—

BARONESS. It is not you? Who then?

COUNT. [*Collecting himself.*] No one. I mean to say that she marries me in order to get married.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] There is someone. I'll know who? [*Aloud.*] And when will the marriage take place?

COUNT. [*Sadly.*] The first banns will be published to-morrow, and I am going out to buy the bridal gift?

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] Marriages have fallen through even after that. [*Aloud.*] I have to con-

gratulate you. [*Enter Madame Marechal in stunning street costume.*]

MME. MARECHAL. My excuses, my dear Baroness. I have just been told that you were here.

BARONESS. In very good company, as you see, Madame. But you were going out, and I do not wish to detain you.

MME. MARECHAL. Oh, I beg of you, there is no haste.

BARONESS. I must confess to you that my visit was not for you. I have a communication to impart to M. Marechal. Be kind enough to have the door of the sanctuary to which he has withdrawn opened for me.

MME. MARECHAL. What? Did not all doors fly open before you?

BARONESS. The servant mentioned his orders and I did not resist. [*Enter Maximilien.*]

MME. MARECHAL. What is my husband doing, M. Gerard, that he should forbid his door?

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] The secretary! Could it be he?

MAXIMILIEN. I believe, Madame, that he is committing his speech to memory.

BARONESS. Does he intend to speak it?

MAXIMILIEN. Yes, Madame.

BARONESS. [*To Madame Marechal.*] Then I will have very little to say to him; I'll just put my head in. By the way, you did not forget your promise for this evening?

MME. MARECHAL. Such things are not to be forgotten.

BARONESS. If M. Gerard has nothing better to do, I would delight in receiving him also.

MAXIMILIEN. Me, Madame?

COUNT. [*Aside.*] What need had she to invite that fellow?

BARONESS. At your age it is pleasant to meet illustrious men at close range. There will be several in my parlors.

MAXIMILIEN. I am very thankful to you, Madame.

BARONESS. You'll come, won't you? [*To Madame Marechal.*] Will you show me the way, Madame?

MME. MARECHAL. I will. [*Exit.*]

BARONESS. [*In a low voice to the Count, indicating Maximilien.*] A very nice young man.

COUNT. I hadn't noticed.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] It is he. [*Exeunt, Baroness and Count.*]

MAXIMILIEN. [*Alone.*] Oh, no, I won't spend my evening at the Baroness'. I will spend it with my old Giboyer. [*Taking his hat from the desk.*] I need to relieve my heart. The few words of excuse from this patrician wounded me more than her insults. She thought she was doing things grandly, and that a half apology was quite enough for a poor devil like me! Let's go to Giboyer.

FERNANDE. [*Entering.*] I must speak to you, Monsieur.

MAXIMILIEN. To me, Mademoiselle?

FERNANDE. Did you not expect it? Did you not understand by all I have done and all I have said since this morning, my deep regret for what happened yesterday?

MAXIMILIEN. Your regret? You're doing me too great an honor?

FERNANDE. It is not enough, I know it. There are offences which demand as complete an atonement from a woman as from a man. I slandered you in thought; I beg your pardon. Is that enough?

MAXIMILIEN. I thank you.

FERNANDE. Thank me by remaining with my father.

MAXIMILIEN. As to that—impossible, Mademoiselle.

FERNANDE. You do not wish me to believe that I am forgiven?

MAXIMILIEN. But you are, from the depth of my heart.

FERNANDE. Then do not leave me the remorse of having taken your position away from you.

MAXIMILIEN. Do not worry about me, Mademoiselle. I'll have no trouble in earning a living; mine is not costly. You did me a great service by opening my eyes to the dangers which my honor would find here. Appearances are against me, I realize that, and the example of my predecessors accuses me. If I were to remain, the world would condemn me as it does them, and it would be just.

FERNANDE. Just?

MAXIMILIEN. Yes, indeed. I wouldn't be much better than they are, if I should accept to be scorned as they are, rightly or wrongly.

FERNANDE. But the testimony of your conscience?

MAXIMILIEN. [*Smiling.*] I know my conscience; she is peevish and would worry me, under pretense that no one has the right to dare public opinion except in the accomplishment of a duty. It is not a duty to spread jam on one's bread.

FERNANDE. You are right; you are an honest man.

MAXIMILIEN. Why, Mademoiselle, honesty is as primary as spelling.

FERNANDE. Few people spell as well as you.

MAXIMILIEN. You're very sceptical for your age.

FERNANDE. [*Lowering her eyes.*] That's twice you have told me that.

MAXIMILIEN. Oh, Mademoiselle, I was making no insinuation—I didn't mean to—I beg your pardon.

FERNANDE. [*After a silence.*] You must not judge me like another; my childhood was not guarded by a mother; I grew alone with the sentiment that I was abandoned and with the instincts of a savage. At the time when the child begins to lean on its father, a stranger arose between my father and me. I understood that my protector was surrendering and I felt that he was threatened—with what? I did not know; but my jealous tenderness became clairvoyant. You were right in pitying me. I have lived and suffered, suffered like a man, not like a young girl. There took place in my head conflicts which have, you might say, changed the sex of my mind. In place of feminine delicacy, a feeling of manly honor developed in me; it is through this only that I am worth anything, and I give you a great proof of my esteem in explaining to you why I claim yours.

MAXIMILIEN. Say, my respect.

FERNANDE. Our paths have met for an instant and will probably part forever; but I shall remember this meeting, and I hope that you will not forget it.

MAXIMILIEN. No, indeed—and my humble good wishes will follow you in your bright new existence. May it keep the promises it holds out to you.

FERNANDE. [*With a sad smile.*] I have not been spoiled, and I am not very exacting.

MAXIMILIEN. And yet your dream seems to me rather aristocratic.

FERNANDE. Do you think I'm in love with a title?

MAXIMILIEN. Well, it cannot be the person who—I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, but I am forgetting myself—I abuse the chance which placed me so far in your confidence.

FERNANDE. [*With an effort.*] How can you fail

to understand, after this confidence, that my father's house has become unbearable to me and that I accept the first hand offered me in order to get out of it?

MAXIMILIEN. What? Is that the only reason?—It's the good Lord that has placed me upon your way, Mademoiselle. Do not take such a desperate step; things are not as serious as you think. I know positively, I know it through the Marquis d'Auberive, that your stepmother's actions are nothing but romantic childishness.

FERNANDE. May Heaven grant it! But—

MAXIMILIEN. But what? What have you found? Letters, avowals? That is possible; but I assure you that that is all.

FERNANDE. And what more could it be?

MAXIMILIEN. [*Looks at her in astonishment, and after a silence, bowing very low.*] That is so.

FERNANDE. You see that I have more reasons than you for leaving. And I am grateful to Count d'Outreville for taking me away.—I hear them enter; let us go on, each one our own path, goodbye. [*Exit.*]

MAXIMILIEN. Oh, chastity! [*He remains motionless, looking towards the door, through which Fernande went out, then goes to his desk, sits down, dips his pen in the inkstand.*] What a fool I am. My work is over! [*Arising.*] M. Marechal does not need me until this evening; I am free. [*Takes his hat.*] What am I going to do with my afternoon? It's queer how bored I am! Bah! I'll take a stroll on the boulevards! [*Sits down.*] Heavens, how bored I am!

GIBOYER. [*Entering.*] Morning, boy.

MAXIMILIEN. You, my old friend? You're in the nick of time! What are you going to do to-day? I am free, let us go to Viroflay.

GIBOYER. On the fifteenth of January!

MAXIMILIEN. That's so.

GIBOYER. You bud too early. Calm these spring-time feelings, and listen to me attentively.—Maximilien, we are rich.

MAXIMILIEN. Rich?

GIBOYER. I have just inherited from a relative I didn't know.

MAXIMILIEN. Inherited?

GIBOYER. Twelve thousand a year.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Sadly.*] Is that all?

GIBOYER. What do you mean, is that all? Are you so intimate with millionaires?

MAXIMILIEN. No, but I thought you were announcing great wealth to me.

GIBOYER. I thought so! A thousand a month appeared rather mythical to me.

MAXIMILIEN. That isn't wealth, my poor friend.

GIBOYER. At any rate, it's independence! You no longer need to be in anyone's service. Send in your resignation to M. Marechal.

MAXIMILIEN. It's done.

GIBOYER. Bah!

MAXIMILIEN. I did not await your millions to feel bored at being under orders.

GIBOYER. Everything is for the best. You're going to start again on your tour of the world.

MAXIMILIEN. Leave Paris?

GIBOYER. What's keeping you here?

MAXIMILIEN. Why—you.

GIBOYER. You will imagine that I am still in Lyons. I am not parting from you for my own pleasure. When you wish Bordeaux wine to grow old quickly, you send it to sea. It is an expense of money but an economy of time. Within a year, I'll have Maximilien back from the Indies.

MAXIMILIEN. You want to send me to India?

GIBOYER. Not quite; to America.

MAXIMILIEN. What for?

GIBOYER. To study democracy, of course.

MAXIMILIEN. Thanks, it's too far.

GIBOYER. It is farther than Viroflay, but you used to love to travel.

MAXIMILIEN. I don't seem to love it any more.

GIBOYER. Ah! Whom do you love?

MAXIMILIEN. I love—but why don't you go to America yourself, to cure yourself once for all of your chimeras?

GIBOYER. My chimeras?—Aren't they yours any more? This is something new! What's back of all this?

MAXIMILIEN. [*Impatiently.*] Nothing. What do you suppose?

GIBOYER. [*Taking him by the arm.*] Look me in the eyes.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Releasing himself abruptly.*] Ah, let me be.—Am I not free to believe anything beside what you teach? [*Goes up stage.*]

GIBOYER. Ah!—And may I know what you believe?

MAXIMILIEN. I believe that the only solid basis in politics as in morals, is faith, there!

GIBOYER. You are a legitimist now?

MAXIMILIEN. I don't have to be a legitimist for that.

GIBOYER. Don't let's play on words, I know but one way of introducing faith into politics, and that is to profess that every power comes from God, and consequently is amenable only to God. That's a very important opinion, I do not deny it, but when one professes it, whatever may be the party to which he thinks he belongs, he is a legitimist.

MAXIMILIEN. All right, let's say I'm one.

GIBOYER. You are?

MAXIMILIEN. Why not?

GIBOYER. My life would escape me for the second time? [*Going to Maximilien.*] Who stole you from me, cruel child? How do you escape me? Who perverted you? There is a woman back of this! Only women bring about these conversions! You are not a legitimist, you are in love.

MAXIMILIEN. I?

GIBOYER. There is some siren here, who took pleasure in catechising you.

MAXIMILIEN. Madame Marechal a siren! My only catechism was a speech of her husband's over which I meditated while copying it.

GIBOYER. Marechal's speech! A conglomeration of sophisms and of platitudes!

MAXIMILIEN. How do you know?

GIBOYER. I ought to, I wrote it!

MAXIMILIEN. You?

GIBOYER. [*After some hesitation.*] Yes, I.—I wrote it, so you see what it's worth.

MAXIMILIEN. So you do that kind of business? That was before your inheritance, I suppose?

GIBOYER. Scorn me, trample on me, I don't count any more; but give me back the straightforwardness of your mind which is the foundation of my edifice, my rehabilitation in my own eyes, my resurrection! I dishonored in my person a soldier of truth. I am no longer worthy of serving her; but I owe her some one in my place, and I promised myself that it would be you. Do not desert, my dear child.

MAXIMILIEN. Your truth is no longer mine! The truth I recognize and which I wish to serve, is the truth which dictated that speech to you. What

astonishes me is that it did not undeceive you concerning your Utopias.

GIBOYER. The worst Utopia is that which wishes to make humanity go back.

MAXIMILIEN. Even when it took the wrong road?

GIBOYER. Rivers do not take the wrong road and submerge the madman who wishes to stop them.

MAXIMILIEN. Words, mere words!

GIBOYER. Facts!—Ask the Restoration.

MAXIMILIEN. After all you have nothing to put in the place of what you have destroyed.

GIBOYER. Nothing? Where did you ever see in history that a society has replaced another without bringing into the world a higher dogma?—Antiquity did not admit equality either before the human law nor before divine law; the middle ages proclaimed it in Heaven, '89 proclaimed it upon earth.

MAXIMILIEN. You are right; does that please you?

GIBOYER. Do not avoid the discussion, my child; I have such great need of persuading you! It is not an opinion I am defending, it is my life!

MAXIMILIEN. Your life!—Come, is a society possible without hierarchy?

GIBOYER. No, a hundred times no!

MAXIMILIEN. Then where does equality come in?

GIBOYER. Ah—the confusion of languages!—Equality is not a level.

MAXIMILIEN. What is it then?

GIBOYER. This great word can have but one sense, the same here as above: “to each one according to his works!” I wrote a book on that, which I shall let you read.

MAXIMILIEN. No.

GIBOYER. No?

MAXIMILIEN. What's the good? If it does not convince me, it's that much lost time.

GIBOYER. But if it does?

MAXIMILIEN. Who tells you that I want to be convinced?

GIBOYER. There is another woman here besides Madame Marechal.

MAXIMILIEN. You're mad! There is only an heiress here.

GIBOYER. Ah, I understand.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Indignantly.*] If I were tempted to love her, I would feel contempt for myself, for I will not sell anything, neither my heart—nor my pen.

GIBOYER. Nor your pen? You are ungrateful, when it was for you, only for you!

MAXIMILIEN. For me? By what right do you render me dishonorable services? Who told you that I did not prefer poverty? Is that what you call your inheritance? You may keep it, I shall not touch it! [*Giboyer lets himself fall into an armchair and hides his face in his hands.*] I beg your pardon, my old friend, you did not know what you were doing.

GIBOYER. I knew that I was sacrificing myself for you, that I had to protect your youth from the trials to which mine had given way, and I licked the mud from your path; but you should not reproach me for it. My pen is not the first thing I sold for you—I had sold my liberty before.

MAXIMILIEN. Your liberty!

GIBOYER. During two years, in order to pay for your education at college, I served the prison sentences of a newspaper, at so much a year—but never mind, I am only a good-for-nothing, and you will not accept anything from me. Ah, God punishes me too severely! And yet I am not a bad man—there are very sad destinies. Duties too heavy to bear have

brought me down. I began because of my father—I ended—

MAXIMILIEN. [*Kneeling before him.*] Because of your son. [*Giboyer clasps him in his arms.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT IV.

[*A parlor at the Baroness'. Double doors at the back opening upon a second parlor where some elderly persons are seen, playing whist or conversing; a side door, also open, leads to an ante-chamber which one reaches from the outside. At the back, a tea table; a sofa to the right on the slant; armchair and chair to the left; sofa against the wall; on the left, back, an armchair near the table.*]

BARONESS. You see, Mademoiselle, that I did not deceive you when I told you that my parlor is not very cheerful.

FERNANDE. It is very interesting, Madame; you have here a reunion of celebrities belonging to all regimes.

BARONESS. A reunion—say union! But I admit that these celebrities do not make a bouquet of freshly cut flowers. Therefore, I wished to enliven it by introducing some well-thinking young women, and I expect this evening two or three who are as courageous as you were.

FERNANDE—It did not require courage, Madame.

A SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Viscount deVrilliere. [*The Viscount salutes the Baroness, who offers him her hand.*]

BARONESS. Your mother must be better, since you are here?

VISCOUNT. Thank Heaven, she is quite well now!

BARONESS. Then go at once and reassure the good Madame de la Vieuxtour. She was asking for news a few moments ago.

VISCOUNT. Charming woman! [*He bows and enters the parlor at the back.*]

BARONESS. This forty-year-old man is the baby of our coterie. We also need a few young men; but that's a very delicate point; I will not permit a suspicion of coquettishness in my house. I am very much afraid that I shall be reduced to small inconsequential gentlemen like your father's secretary, for instance.

FERNANDE. You were not fortunate in your first attempt. M. Gerard is far from being an inconsequential little gentleman; he is on the contrary a man of great merit, as I have been told.

BARONESS. I do not dispute that; I meant inconsequential in regard to women. A woman of a certain class cannot pay any attention to a nobody, don't you think so?

FERNANDE. You will think me very plebeian, Madame, for I believe that an honorable man is not a nobody.

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] That's clear enough. [*Aloud.*] By a nobody, I meant a man without birth. Beside, M. Gerard is charming; he has a natural distinction which is quite rare, even among ourselves. If he entered a parlor at the same time as certain noblemen, on hearing the name announced, the great name would undoubtedly be applied to him. He evidently was not born to be a secretary.

FERNANDE. That's why he is no longer one.

BARONESS. Ah! Since when?

FERNANDE. Since yesterday.

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Chevalier de Germoise.
[*The Chevalier comes to greet the Baroness.*]

BARONESS. You are one of the last.

CHEVALIER. Glad you should have noticed it, Madame.

BARONESS. M. d'Auberive was beginning to grow impatient.

CHEVALIER. He does not like to be kept waiting for his game. [*He bows and enters the parlor.*]

BARONESS. And why is he no longer a secretary?

FERNANDE. Because, as you said, he was not born to be one.

BARONESS [*Aside.*] She lowers her eyes. [*Aloud.*] I do not know why I am interested in him. Has he another position?

FERNANDE. No, Madame, not that I know of; and you would be very kind, since he interests you, to do what you could for him. You are all-powerful.

BARONESS. That's saying a great deal; but I would call myself very unlucky if I did not succeed in being agreeable to you.

FERNANDE. And I would be very grateful to you, Madame.

SERVANT [*Announcing.*] M. Couturier de la Haute-Sarthe.

BARONESS. I beg your pardon. Here is a great personage to whom I must speak. [*Taking Fernande to the parlor.*] And also if I appropriate you thus, for my own benefit, I shall displease M. d'Outreville.

FERNANDE. Do you think so?

BARONESS. [*Having reached the back parlor.*] I shall do what I can for this poor young man.

FERNANDE. Thanks. [*They shake hands. Fernande enters the parlor.*]

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] That's one—now let's cut short M. Marechal's glory. [*To M. Couturier.*] How is your Highness?

COUTURIER. And your Grace?

BARONESS. A little bewildered.

COUTURIER. And by what? [*They sit down to the left on the chair and on the armchair.*]

BARONESS. I give you ten guesses, I give you a hundred—I had this afternoon a call from this poor M. d'Aigremont.

COUTURIER. Why poor? Is he ill?

BARONESS. Worse than that, as you will see! The conversation turned naturally on politics, on our plan of campaign, on Marechal, on the speech.

COUTURIER. Well?

BARONESS. And what do you suppose. He regrets that he was not asked to deliver it.

COUTURIER. He! A Protestant? He is crazy.

BARONESS. He is, that's what I thought right away. And it is the more troublesome that he reasons about his madness.

COUTURIER. How is that?

BARONESS. He says that religious differences, like political differences, must give way before the common enemy. That all the churches must join hands to fight the Revolution, that a Protestant pleading our cause would have more weight, that it would be a great example, that—oh, I don't remember! Vagaries!

COUTURIER. Pardon me! This is not at all extravagant! It shows on the contrary a power of foresight which astonishes me in M. d'Aigremont.

BARONESS. [*Artlessly.*] Really?

COUTURIER. That idea is not his own, it must have been suggested to him. I am astonished that a mind as keen as yours did not realize that just as I did.

BARONESS. I am only a woman and bow before your great reasoning powers.

COUTURIER. To have our speech uttered by a Protestant would be truly a triumph!

BARONESS. Ah, Heavens!

COUTURIER. Why this exclamation?

BARONESS. I hope that you are not going to take the speech away from my poor Marechal?

COUTURIER. Of course not. There will be more than one speech on the question.

BARONESS [*Quickly.*] Give the others to whomsoever you please; it's the first one that counts. Tying on the bell is the chief operation.

COUTURIER. That's so.

BARONESS. Isn't it?

COUTURIER. So much so that any other consideration gives way before that one.

BARONESS. What do you mean?

COUTURIER. My dear Baroness, in the name of our cause, I beseech you to abandon your protege.

BARONESS. Alas, you take me by my weak side. I can refuse nothing to our cause. But is there really a sufficiently transcendental interest for us to decide to grieve this excellent man? That's very hard, my dear friend.

COUTURIER [*Arising.*] What a mistake, not to have thought of d'Aigremont sooner! But how could we suppose he would accept? We are pledged to Marechal now.

BARONESS. He is one of our creatures and because of that has some claims upon us.

COUTURIER. I beg your pardon, the contrary would be more correct.

BARONESS. Did I stumble again! Poor old Marechal!—I know what we might say to him; we might make him understand that this is not a question of personalities, that you, yourself, in his place, would not hesitate to withdraw in the general interest.

COUTURIER. And it would be strange that M. Marechal should hesitate where I would not, you must admit that.

BARONESS. Just the same I cannot tell you how painful this is to me, but even my friendship for Marechal must yield before your arguments.

COUTURIER. I expected no less from your patriotism.

BARONESS. But I warn you that all the members of the committee will not be as disinterested as I am. You will find great opposition in M. d'Auberive.

COUTURIER. Yes, he has a great liking for Marechal.

BARONESS. The more so that he wishes to marry Mademoiselle Fernande to a cousin of his whom you will see here.

COUTURIER. Really, this descendant of the crusaders consents to cross his race with our own?

BARONESS. He probably conjectures that the young person has already blue blood in her veins—but that does not concern us. So you understand how eager he is to soften the mesalliance by a pseudo nobility of position.

COUTURIER. Thanks for the information. I am going to secure the approval of all the others; they will compel him to acquiesce.

BARONESS. [*Looking towards the left.*] Madame Marechal!—How painful all this is.

COUTURIER. Warn her gently; as for me, I shall do my duty as I have always done it without hesitation and without weakness.

BARONESS. Antique soul! [*Exit Couturier, enter Madame Marechal.*]

BARONESS. [*Aside.*] That's two!—Now, the next one! [*Aloud.*] I hope you are not thinking of leaving us.

MADAME MARECHAL. Excuse me, but I am tired. Nothing less than the pleasure of coming to your

house would have decided me to go out this evening. I do not know what has become of M. Marechal.

BARONESS. He went into the library to seek a little solitude, let us respect his meditations. As it happens, I need some confidential information which you are able to give me. [*Leading her to the sofa.*] You will grant me five minutes, my dear friend, even if you are tired? [*They sit down.*]

MME. MARECHAL. You would make me forget it, my dear Baroness.

BARONESS. Why does M. Gerard leave your husband?

MME. MARECHAL. He is a very proud young man, who cannot bear being dependent.

BARONESS. Yes, that is the official reason, but I ask you for the true reason. I must know what to think of him before I do anything for him.

MME. MARECHAL. Let us protect him, my dear Baroness. He's worthy of it. He has the most delicate, the most loyal, the most dependable heart you may imagine.

BARONESS. I am delighted. I do not know why—but I was afraid he was a flirt. I prefer to believe in the sincerity of his love.

MME. MARECHAL. His love! For whom?

BARONESS. Why—for Fernande.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Quickly.*] For Fernande! Poor fellow! He is far from thinking of it.

BARONESS. Really? Are you quite sure?

MME. MARECHAL. [*Worried.*] But what makes you believe?

BARONESS. Nothing; do not let us speak of it any more; I must have been mistaken.

MME. MARECHAL. A woman with your tact does not make a mistake without good reason. What did you notice?

BARONESS. What shall I tell you? I had foolishly imagined that Fernande's marriage had something to do with the departure of the young man. Did he speak of leaving you before M. d'Outreville appeared?

MME. MARECHAL. [*Impressed.*] No,—and he resigned the very same day.—But, no, he learned of the marriage only this morning.

BARONESS. Don't you see! And unless you suppose that Fernande announced it to him yesterday, which is impossible,—

MME. MARECHAL. [*With great emotion.*] Why impossible?

BARONESS. You would have to admit that she is not indifferent to the fellow, which I do not wish to believe,—but that is not the point: she has just recommended him to me with a warmth which is somewhat surprising coming from a person who is usually so reserved.

MME. MARECHAL. Really?

BARONESS. She is a very energetic young person.

MME. MARECHAL. I know her! And Gerard—could they have deceived me thus?

BARONESS. Let us not judge hastily.

MME. MARECHAL. I remember a thousand details now: the offended looks of that man, the beseeching attitude of Fernande—she was trying to be alone with him. [*Turning towards the parlor.*] There, look at them chatting together! How absolutely they forget that they are not alone—and this fool, d'Outreville, who doesn't notice anything!

BARONESS. I wouldn't be so sure of that—he is watching them with a worried look, as if they were robbing him.—Hm! all this might end badly: the marriage isn't made yet, take care!

MME. MARECHAL. You frighten me.

BARONESS. You have no time to lose if you care about an alliance with the Count. I cannot believe in Fernande's duplicity. She is acting unconsciously; recall her to her senses by making her feel sharply the abyss which separates her from this fellow.

MME. MARECHAL. Yes, but how?

BARONESS. Put the young man in his place publicly.

MME. MARECHAL. On what occasion?

BARONESS. The occasion we can find here, this evening. We shall seek one. Love humiliated does not last.

MME. MARECHAL. You are right; thanks, my dear Baroness! Fernande will be saved. [*Aside.*] And I shall be revenged. [*Aloud. On seeing Maximilien enter.*] There is the deceiver; let's go into the parlor—I could not contain myself.

BARONESS. Yes, do not let us seem to be conspiring. [*They leave through one door while Maximilien enters through the other.*]

MAXIMILIEN. I did not want to come,—why did I? How beautiful she is! What an adorable soul! I feel overcome by a mad love, and am already incapable of defending myself!—Well, why struggle against myself? Why cling to my vanishing reason? Let us yield to the lure of the abyss! The die is cast! I love her! I love her! I love her!—Ah, what a good resolution that is! How pleasant it is to be alive! My interest in all things is reviving—

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] M. de Boyergi.

MAXIMILIEN. [*On the threshold of the parlor.*] I am even interested in seeing Deodat's successor!—You?

GIBOYER. [*With a gesture of anger.*] Go to the devil!

MAXIMILIEN. It is you who sign Boyergi?

GIBOYER. [*Harshly.*] How do you happen to be here?

MAXIMILIEN. Do you then wish to keep up this horrible trade? Poor father!

GIBOYER. In the first place, you have promised me to forget that I am your father.

MAXIMILIEN. I promised you not to say it; but forget it—! Did I promise you that I would be ungrateful?

GIBOYER. Ah!—I ask you for but one proof of your gratitude. Let me finish my work. I have no need of your respect.

MAXIMILIEN. But I need to respect you! What ungodly struggle do you wish to begin between my love and my honor? Which of those do you wish to win?

GIBOYER. [*Seated on the sofa.*] I can't allow you to be worn out by poverty!

MAXIMILIEN. Do you think that I would accept your benefactions, knowing what they cost you? Didn't you put me in a position to earn my living and yours? Have we so many needs, you and I? We know poverty; let us go back to it cheerfully, arm in arm. Will it not be charming to live together with our work, in a garret?

GIBOYER. Charming for me!

MAXIMILIEN. And for me, I assure you. I know who you are now. I am proud of you: I have read your book!

GIBOYER. Did it convince you?

MAXIMILIEN. Yes, indeed. [*Putting his hand on Giboyer's forehead.*] But I no longer wish you to vilify the great mind that is there.—How you must suffer in reviling your great ideas in this reactionary newspaper! Leave it, I beg of you. [*Smiling.*] I command you to! I have some rights over you,

haven't I? You have licked the mud upon my road often enough, as you said; wipe your mouth and kiss me. [*Kisses him on the cheek.*]

GIBOYER. You're a brave fellow.

MAXIMILIEN. You will obey me?

GIBOYER. I have got to. Aren't you my master?

MAXIMILIEN. I am successful in everything to-day. Long live the Lord!

GIBOYER. In everything! In what else?

MAXIMILIEN. Nothing.

GIBOYER. You have secrets from your old comrade?

MAXIMILIEN. We shall write your resignation as soon as we get back to your lodgings, and I will take it, tomorrow morning early, so that the members of the committee get it on awakening. What a pleasure it is to take their champion away from them! You can't imagine what is heard here. A real conspiracy against our ideas.

GIBOYER. Yes, I know. The great parlor conspiracy, with ramifications in the dining-rooms and boudoirs.

MAXIMILIEN. You are joking, but beware! The name of this party is legion.

GIBOYER. Legions of colonels without regiments, of staffs without troops. They consider as their army the spectators who watch them prance; but on the day they would make a real levy, they would sound the recall in the desert.

MAXIMILIEN. If that's so, they are not very dangerous.

GIBOYER. They are, for the governments they support. These fellows can only upset the carriages they drive, but they upset them well. [*Two servants bring the tea.*]

MAXIMILIEN. [*Looking into the parlor.*] Hush!

They are coming—the Marquis d'Auberive, with whom is he?

GIBOYER. With the eminent Couturier de la Haute-Sarthe, a repentant liberal.

MAXIMILIEN. They seem to adore one another.

GIBOYER. I should say so! All brothers and friends—an example, this morning I had amused myself by putting in some digs at the same Couturier in my article; the Marquis scratched out the paragraph with the simple and profound sentence: “Not yet!”

MAXIMILIEN. Well, the Marquis won't scratch out anything more for you.

MARQUIS. [*To M. Couturier, down stage, left.*] Since the committee is unanimous in favor of M. d'Aigremont, I can only bow before its decision, however painful it might be to me.

COUTURIER. The decision was taken only because of a superior interest which you yourself recognize.

MARQUIS. I do not deny it, but I would prefer to let another deal the blow to poor Marechal.

COUTURIER. We thought that from your hand, the blow would not be so hard; but if it is too painful to you, I will do it.

MARQUIS. Thanks. [*He sits down on the left—M. Couturier becomes lost in the crowd.*]

CHEVALIER. [*To a lady.*] The little Gerard is really much better looking than Count d'Outreville; but is it quite certain that Mademoiselle Fernande prefers the secretary? The Baroness is so afraid of it, that she seems to be sure. [*He leads the lady to an armchair.*]

MME. MARECHAL. [*Seated on the sofa, to the Count, who brings her a cup of tea.*] Very hot, if you please, I like it very hot.

MME. DE LA VIEUXTOUR. [*Behind the sofa, to Viscount de Vrilliere.*] Poor woman! She loves everything that burns her fingers.

VISCOUNT DE VRILLIERE. Well, these bourgeois ambitions deserve being scolded at times.

MME. DE LA VIEUXTOUR. After all, the Baroness may be mistaken.

VISCOUNT DE VRILLIERE. Hm! The young man is charming.

MME. DE LA VIEUXTOUR. But not as much as the title of Countess. [*During this dialogue, she goes up stage, talking to all the guests.*] Father Vernier was admirable this morning—were you there, M. de Vrilliere?

VISCOUNT DE VRILLIERE. I was not able to go.

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] They were refusing admission.

MME. DE LA VIEUXTOUR. You lost a great deal, he had such new and touching thoughts on charity.

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] Did he say not to practice it?

MME. MARECHAL. I was shocked by Madame Dervieu's gown. Did you notice it?

BARONESS. No.

MME. MARECHAL. Just think, she had on a dress of pale yellow satin trimmed with cherry velvet, a coat of the same goods trimmed in ermine, a hat of white tulle with ruffles, trimmed with cherry feathers. One goes to church to concentrate one's thoughts, and not to show oneself, don't you think so?

MARQUIS. [*From the other side of the stage.*] I see with pleasure, Madame, that you were concentrating your thoughts.

MME. MARECHAL. Certainly; I had on a carmelite dress.

MME. DE LA VIEUXTOUR. Which fitted you perfectly.

BARONESS. [*Going to Giboyer, behind the sofa.*] Don't you take tea?

GIBOYER. A thousand thanks, Madame, I am afraid of it.

BARONESS. [*Whispering to Mme. Marechal, while showing her Maximilien, who is standing and talking with Fernande, who is seated.*] Now is the time. [*She goes up stage.*]

MME. MARECHAL. M. Gerard—relieve me of my cup.

COUNT. [*Who, on a motion from the Baroness, rushes forward to take the cup.*] Madame. [*On hearing Mme. Marechal, Maximilien starts towards her, but stops on seeing the motion of the Count.*]

MME. MARECHAL. Leave this, Count. The young man is there.

FERNANDE. [*Aside.*] That's too much. [*She arises and goes quickly to the table at the back. Gerard takes a step backward.*]

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] She rings for him.

MME. MARECHAL. [*Still holding her cup.*] M. Gerard?

FERNANDE. [*From the table.*] M. Gerard, will you allow me to wait on you?

MAXIMILIEN. I have already refused a cup, Mademoiselle.

FERNANDE. [*Going to him with a cup in her hand.*] You will not refuse it from my hand. [*Maximilien bows and takes the cup—general astonishment. Great silence.*]

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] So that was his secret! It makes a sensation. [*To Mme. Marechal.*] This cup is in your way! For the lack of the nephew, allow the uncle to be your servant, Madame. [*He takes*

the cup from the hand of Mme. Marechal, who is stupefied, and carries it to the table.]

BARONESS. [*To Mme. Marechal.*] My poor friend! Who could have foreseen?

MME. MARECHAL. And her father isn't here! [*They go back into the parlor, followed by the guests.*]

COUNT. Well, cousin, what do you say about this?

MARQUIS. I say that Fernande very delicately atoned for an impertinence of her stepmother, that's all.

COUNT. That's all? But she loves this young man, she loves him!

MARQUIS. You're losing your head!

COUNT. Possibly; but I declare to you that I renounce this marriage.

MARQUIS. You renounce.

COUNT. Bourgeoise and compromised, that's too much!

MARQUIS. Very much compromised indeed, if you break off; for breaking off would give a serious signification to an incident which in itself is insignificant.

COUNT. I am very sorry but—

MARQUIS. You must consider that Fernande is my ward, my daughter you might say; that it was I who arranged this marriage and that I am to a certain extent responsible for its consequences.

COUNT. Not as much as I am, cousin, so you will let me be the judge on that question.

MARQUIS. So you refuse to marry her?

COUNT. Yes.

MARQUIS. Very well, you'll answer me for that.

COUNT. I! Fight—with my second father—

MARQUIS. I disinherit you, to put you at your ease.

COUNT. But your white hair, sir—

MARQUIS. Don't worry about that; I am a first-class swordsman.

COUNT. And yet if she loves this young man?

MARQUIS. And if she did love him, which I deny, she is a brave heart, who will never fail to plight her troth. Let us go and sit by her side to protect her by our presence against the charitable insinuations of all these devout women. Be a French knight for once in your life!

MARECHAL. [*Enters.*]

MARQUIS. [*To the Count.*] Go without me, sir, I shall join you. [*Exit Count.*]

MARECHAL. What was the Count saying to you? Did the heedlessness of my daughter? for it is only heedlessness—

MARQUIS. We are convinced of that, the Count and I.

MARECHAL. Ah, I breathe again! My wife scared me so. So the marriage still holds?

MARQUIS. More than ever; for it has become indispensable to Fernande. You understand that breaking off, after that foolish action, would compromise her beyond measure.

MARECHAL. That's true.

MARQUIS. Consequently, if anything should happen, which made your position more difficult toward your son-in-law, that would be no reason for returning to your dislike of an aristocratic alliance.

MARECHAL. Certainly not, but what event?

MARQUIS. If, for one reason or another, you were to lose for a time the moral superiority which your political position gives you—

MARECHAL. How could I lose it?

MARQUIS. Monsieur de la Haute-Sarthe* has something to say to you.

MARECHAL. What? You frighten me.

MARQUIS. He will tell you.

MARECHAL. In the name of Heaven, Marquis, explain yourself. I have courage.

MARQUIS. Well, the committee has decided—in spite of me, my dear friend—but I was alone in my opinion—

MARECHAL. What did it decide?

MARQUIS. That they would take the speech away from you.

MARECHAL. But that's infamous! I know it by heart!

MARQUIS. Alas, you must forget it.

MARECHAL. Never; how did I deserve this slur?

MARQUIS. They are deeply grieved about it, and ask your forgiveness; but the interest of the cause comes before everything else. They found a willing Protestant.

MARECHAL. A Protestant? That's absurd! My speech will no longer have any sense.

MARQUIS. [*Seeing Giboyer enter.*] There, my dear fellow, is the author of your speech.

MARECHAL.—M. de Boyergi?

MARQUIS. Ask him what he thinks about it. I am going to chaperone your daughter. [*Exit.*]

MARECHAL. What do you think about it, M. de Boyergi?

GIBOYER. About what?

MARECHAL. About the choice they have made of a Protestant to speak my—your—the speech?

GIBOYER. These gentlemen look upon it as a shining homage to truth; as for me, I think that it will

* The French form really means: the executioner, although it is doubtful whether Marechal would sense that.

furnish a fine exordium for the reply. [*In an oratorical tone.*] And what, gentlemen, is it a Protestant you have been listening to? The first thing he has to do on leaving this place is to convert himself, if he is sincere.

MARECHAL. That's so. I wonder what kind of a Protestant that is, if he doesn't protest.

GIBOYER. This, gentlemen, is one of the most serious symptoms of religious indifference which has been given in our times! You go further than we do in the philosophical religion. The choice of your orator is an admission; the middle ages are dead and it is you who set the last stone upon its grave. Why do you talk of reviving it?

MARECHAL. Bravo! Bravo! I would give a hundred thousand francs out of my own pocket to throw that in the face of the intriguer who supplanted me.

GIBOYER. The fact is that these gentlemen have cruelly baffled you.

MARECHAL. It's an indignity.

GIBOYER. Say, a mystification. They treat you like a clown.

MARECHAL. I'll show them whether I am one.

GIBOYER. They make you so ridiculous that you won't dare to show yourself.

MARECHAL. They won't take it to Heaven with them.

GIBOYER. Unfortunately, you can do nothing against them.

MARECHAL. Who knows.

GIBOYER. [*In a low tone.*] There is a fine revenge against them.

MARECHAL. What is it?

GIBOYER. Answer the speech.

MARECHAL. I?

GIBOYER. Strike them with thunder.

MARECHAL. Ah, if I could.

GIBOYER. All you lack is the thunder. It may be found.

MARECHAL. Who? You?

GIBOYER. No, that's above me. I only know one man capable of refuting my speech; it's my nephew.

MARECHAL. Gerard?

GIBOYER. Yes.

MARECHAL. But he found it unanswerable?

GIBOYER. He thought over it since that, and demolished it for me piece by piece. Shall I confess it to you? He changed my opinion so totally that I abandon the party and to-morrow I shall send in my resignation as chief-editor.

MARECHAL. Really. Maximilien converted you as completely as that? Then he would be able to write me a speech—

GIBOYER. [*Kissing his fingers.*] Oh, a gem!

MARECHAL. And he could do it in a night.

GIBOYER. Easily.

MARECHAL. And I would be able to read it to-morrow?

GIBOYER. What a surprise that would be for those gentlemen.

MARECHAL. Can your nephew hold his tongue?

GIBOYER. Like myself.

MARECHAL. Let him say nothing about it! Neither to my wife nor to my daughter, nor to anyone! And let him bring me his manuscript to-morrow morning.

GIBOYER. Agreed.

MARECHAL. What a revenge. [*He goes back to the parlor.*]

GIBOYER. Here is a recruit of which democracy will not be proud—but before everything else, I must try to secure Maximilien's happiness.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Coming out of the parlor.*] Are you coming?

GIBOYER. You look as if you were intoxicated.

MAXIMILIEN. I am.

GIBOYER. To sober you up, you are going to spend the night in writing the refutation of Marechal's speech,—I'll give you the beginning.

MAXIMILIEN. Why should I?

GIBOYER. I have a deputy who lacks only the power of speech.

MAXIMILIEN. I won't be the one to give it to him. What do I care about politics now?

GIBOYER. Don't you hate those opinions before which merit and honor are an insufficient dowry?

MAXIMILIEN. Yes, I do.

GIBOYER. These opinions which part you from Fernande?

MAXIMILIEN. I hate them.

GIBOYER. Don't you feel rage rising in your heart before this stupid obstacle?

MAXIMILIEN. Yes.

GIBOYER. Don't you feel like jumping on it and fastening your teeth into it?

MAXIMILIEN. You're right. Even if it breaks my teeth, I shall clinch them on it! Let's utter the protest of despair, the handful of dust of the vanquished! Let's go!

GIBOYER. Go and get your overcoat. [*Aside.*] I never wear any—it's too warm. [*Exeunt.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT V.

[*Same scene as second act. Madame Marechal is seated in the middle of the stage, embroidering; Fernande walks back and forth silently.*]

MME. MARECHAL. You are very nervous, Mademoiselle.

FERNANDE. And you very calm, Madame.

MME. MARECHAL. I have no reason for not being calm.

FERNANDE. When my father is perhaps making his speech at this very moment.

MME. MARECHAL. Oh, that's what's worrying you.

FERNANDE. What else, Madame? I admire your tranquillity.

MME. MARECHAL. Your father's speech is magnificent and I am sure that it will be a triumph.

FERNANDE. I do not ask that much.

MME. MARECHAL. I should say not; he unfurls a flag which is not yours.

FERNANDE. I have no flag, Madame; I do not dabble in politics.

MME. MARECHAL. You astonish me; I thought you were a Republican at heart.

FERNANDE. Why so?

MME. MARECHAL. Their opinion does away with social distinctions.

FERNANDE. I do not understand you.

MME. MARECHAL. You still play the part of an artless child, after yesterday's scandal?

FERNANDE. Scandal? You are the only one, Madame, who puts such an interpretation upon a simple action. I am sure that all high-minded people approved of what I did; first of all, Monsieur

d'Outreville, who is most interested in this question.

MME. MARECHAL. Do not think you delighted him by your little manifestation! I still fail to understand why he did not break off the engagement at once.

FERNANDE. If I suspected him of having thought of it for an instant, I would break it off.

MME. MARECHAL. You are severe.

FERNANDE. I will not permit him to question my honesty.

SERVANT. Does Madame receive?

MME. MARECHAL. Whom?

SERVANT. Baroness Pfeffers.

FERNANDE. [*Aside.*] Again?

MME. MARECHAL. Show her in. [*Servant introduces Baroness.*]

MME. MARECHAL. [*Showing the Baroness to a seat.*] Do you know, my dear Baroness, that you are spoiling us?

BARONESS. [*Who remains standing.*] Alas, Madame, I come to-day against my wishes, on a mission which will certainly surprise you, and which should have been M. d'Auberive's painful task rather than mine.—M. d'Outreville judged otherwise and notwithstanding the dislike I feel in interfering in such delicate matters, I had to yield to his entreaties.

MME. MARECHAL. Does he take back his word? [*To Fernande.*] What was I telling you? That's the result of your eccentricities. After yesterday's scene, this rupture is a disaster for you!

BARONESS. Do not let us exaggerate, Madame; Mademoiselle Fernande's situation remains blameless. M. d'Outreville, like a true gentleman, did not wish for a rupture as long as it might be interpreted in a way detrimental to his betrothed; but M. Marechal's speech did away with all his hesitation.

FERNANDE. My father spoke?

BARONESS. Yes, Mademoiselle.—It was on leaving the chamber that M. d'Outreville rushed to my house, indignant at this unqualified facing about.

FERNANDE. What do you mean?

BARONESS. Well, how do you want me to call it? I admit that M. Marechal might have been hurt, that he might have refused to understand the superior reasons which compelled the committee to choose another orator.

MME. MARECHAL. Another orator?—What do you mean?

BARONESS. Don't you know that they took the speech away from him to give it to M. d'Aigremont?

MME. MARECHAL. We'll be scoffed at, Madame!

FERNANDE. And yet you said that my father spoke.

BARONESS. Alas, yes! He arose after M. d'Aigremont's speech, and to the great surprise of our friends, and to their greater indignation, read a furious reply to the noble words that had just been heard.

MME. MARECHAL. How horrible! We'll be the laughing stock of the town.

BARONESS. I am afraid so, Madame. M. d'Outreville left the session, he hastened to my house; you know the rest.

FERNANDE. Tell him, Madame, that he did not need to ask for his release; my father released him.

BARONESS. This answer is worthy of you, Mademoiselle. Goodbye, Madame. Be sure that I share the sorrow which M. Marechal's conduct causes you. [*Aside.*] Within a month I shall wear azure with three gold bezants. [*Enter Marechal.*]

FERNANDE. [*Rushing to kiss him.*] Father!

[*Marechal gracefully salutes the Baroness, who goes out without looking at him.*]

MARECHAL. [*To Fernande.*] Why does the Baroness assume this haughty air?

MME. MARECHAL. How can you ask?

MARECHAL. Oh, you know?—Well so much the better.

MME. MARECHAL. Apostate! [*Fernande sits down to her tapestry.*]

MARECHAL. Easy there, Madame Marechal, if there has been apostasy on my part, it was when I abandoned the principles of my father,—not when I return to them. I am a plebeian, if you didn't know it before!

MME. MARECHAL. Ah, if I could have suspected!

MARECHAL. My name is not even a name, it's a nickname; among my ancestors, there was a marshal, not a marshal of France, do you hear? A common blacksmith. Blush about it if you want to; I am proud of it.

MME. MARECHAL. Just Heavens! To what did I expose myself, when I committed a mesalliance!

MARECHAL. Leave me alone with your mesalliance. You're no more noble than I am.

MME. MARECHAL. Sir!

MARECHAL. Your name was Robillard, and your great-grandfather was—

MME. MARECHAL. Do, at least, respect my family.

MARECHAL. It is not respectable.—I esteem you none the less for that; I have no prejudices. I scorn nobility; the only distinction that I admit between men, is wealth.

MME. MARECHAL. If you scorn nobility, it pays you back. Count d'Outreville has already sent word to us, through the Baroness, that he would not marry the daughter of a demagogue.

MARECHAL. Really! He will no longer honor me by pocketing my coin? M. Shortcash dismisses me? He dismisses the thought of an alliance with me? What a coincidence! I was going to dismiss him.

MME. MARECHAL. Why, your language becomes lower with your sentiments; you are becoming common.

MARECHAL. I speak as I please, as behooves a free man.

MME. MARECHAL. You are a Revolutionist, a cannibal, that's what you are.

MARECHAL. You make me smile. That is all the effect that outbursts of weakness produce upon real strength.

MME. MARECHAL. I leave the place to you, sir.

MARECHAL. Go back to your own apartments; and henceforth, stay there.

[Madame Marechal leaves indignantly.]

MARECHAL. *[Taking a seat near Fernande.]* You do not say anything, little girl? Do you regret d'Outreville? Did you love him?

FERNANDE. No, father; it was a marriage of convenience.

MARECHAL. He wasn't good-looking. I don't know how I could ever have thought of giving a handsome girl like you to this noble broomstick. Don't worry, you will not lack suitors, with your fortune and your father's glory.

FERNANDE. So you had a great success?

MARECHAL. *[Modestly.]* Enormous, my child! Bigger than anything that took place within the last ten years. Ah, the gentlemen of the committee must be biting their fingernails for having taken their speech away from me! I smashed it to smithereens! You will read the paper to-morrow morning.—I hope you are not a legitimist?

FERNANDE. I am nothing; but I was astonished that you should be one; for you had no reasons for being one.

MARECHAL. [*Rising.*] I wasn't at heart—I had foolishly allowed myself to be talked over by your stepmother and the confounded Marquis: I believed in the possibility of an alliance between the old and the new aristocracy; but the scales fell from my eyes.

FERNANDE. [*Grasping his arm tenderly.*] However this might be, I am glad of your success and very glad above all that it is all over.

MARECHAL. Over? That's only the beginning! All the orators of the opposite party gave notice that they would attack me to-morrow; but they do not know whom they have to deal with! The day after to-morrow will be my turn; my friends are depending on me: I shall not fail them.

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] M. de Boyergi.

MARECHAL. Show him in.—Leave us, Fernande, we have to talk. [*He kisses her on the forehead, and she leaves the room.*] Well, my dear Boyergi, you are coming to receive my thanks?

GIBOYER. I bring you my congratulations.

MARECHAL. And I accept them! But a good share of them belong to your nephew, do you hear? He expressed my ideas wonderfully, much better than I could have done myself. I admit that.

GIBOYER. You are too modest.

MARECHAL. No, my dear fellow, I am only just. This young man will rise, I tell you, and you may believe me; I know what I'm talking about. I wish to attach him to me and I'll take care of his fortune.

GIBOYER. I thank you very much but I have other plans for him; I shall take him to America.

MARECHAL. You'll take him away?

GIBOYER. Yes; I have accepted the direction of a

great newspaper in Philadelphia and I need Maximilien's help.

MARECHAL. But hang it, I need him too! I need him more than you. I have a great position to sustain, a great cause to defend.

GIBOYER. You are big enough to do it alone.

MARECHAL. I don't know! This young man is very useful to me, I do not deny that.

GIBOYER. Useful, yes; but not indispensable.

MARECHAL. I beg your pardon. I am accustomed to his ways of working and he is accustomed to mine. He completes me, he is my right hand, it is he who holds my pen. And besides, I am satisfied with his style. I don't want to change,—and then I love that fellow! I wish to train him myself, in my school. Where will he find a better chance for training than he will find if he stays with me?

GIBOYER. That isn't the question.

MARECHAL. What is the question? Is it a question of salary? Settle that yourself. What would he earn in America? I'll give him twice the amount.

GIBOYER. Well—

MARECHAL. He wants his independence? He shall have it! No one will know that he belongs to me—I like that just as well! Come, if you have his interest at heart, you must accept my offers. They are handsome!

GIBOYER. So handsome that I can only excuse my refusal by telling you the whole truth. I take Maximilien with me more especially to give him a change, to tear him away from a hopeless love.

MARECHAL. He is in love? Well, what of it! We have all been—and here we are!

GIBOYER. It is not a slight affair, sir; it is a passion.

MARECHAL. What? A young girl he cannot marry?

GIBOYER. Exactly.

MARECHAL. The devil take the young people! [*Aside.*] And my reply—the day after to-morrow. [*Aloud.*] When do you leave?

GIBOYER. To-morrow evening.

MARECHAL. Give me, at least, a week.

GIBOYER. Not one day; I am expected.

MARECHAL. Hang it! Is there no way to arrange this marriage?

GIBOYER. It is so impossible that we do not even wish to.

MARECHAL. Has the family such extraordinary pretensions? For after all, your nephew is a charming fellow; he has a splendid future before him, and a very acceptable present, since I give him—yes, I'll pay him twenty thousand francs. Confound it, that's a splendid position. What do those fools want?

GIBOYER. If I told you the young lady's name, you would not insist.

MARECHAL. Is she then a Montmorency?

GIBOYER. Better than that, sir! To cut it short, it is Mademoiselle Fernande.

MARECHAL. My daughter?—My secretary allows himself to cast his eyes upon my daughter?

GIBOYER. No, sir, since he is leaving for America.

MARECHAL. A pleasant trip to him! She is not for him, my dear sir.

GIBOYER. [*Bowing as if to take leave.*] I know it. May she be happy with Count d'Outreville!

MARECHAL. D'Outreville? Yes, indeed! [*Bringing Giboyer back.*] Another thing for which I am indebted to you! It's all off, thanks to the attitude you made me take.

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] I suspected that much.

MARECHAL. [*Walking back and forth.*] My poor child! Her marriage was announced everywhere! The bridal gifts were bought, the banns published! How shall I marry her now? And all that through your fault!

GIBOYER. [*Very coldly.*] You didn't care about that when I came.

MARECHAL. Alas, I was depending upon my glory to offset the bad effect of it. My glory! Another disappointment! You deliver me helpless to the enemies I have made! I am the butt of a powerful and a revengeful clique! Jests will pour upon my silence. All that's left for me to do is to abandon politics and go and plant my cabbages. The disaster is complete! The father is even more compromised than the daughter. [*Sits down to the right.*]

GIBOYER. A rich heiress is never so compromised that she cannot find a husband.

MARECHAL. [*Cast down.*] Yes, some penniless fop who will take her for her money and make her unhappy.

GIBOYER. That's so, you are right. I wasn't thinking of that. A disinterested young man who would marry her for love—that's hard to find. And even supposing that you should find one, your daughter would be out of her troubles, but not you.

MARECHAL. Of course, not.

GIBOYER. Unless your son-in-law were capable of taking the place of my nephew; and you can't pick one like that in the street every day.

MARECHAL. I know that.

GIBOYER. And then, it is enough that one man should know the secrets of your labor.

MARECHAL. That's already too much.

GIBOYER. How can we get out of that?

MARECHAL. [*Striking his forehead.*] What fools

we are! That's perfectly easy. [*Goes to the chimney and rings.*]

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] Yes, with a little help.

MARECHAL. [*Aside, coming down stage.*] It will do me the greatest honor. Besides, I cannot do otherwise. [*To the servant who appears.*] Ask Mademoiselle to come and speak to me.

GIBOYER. You have an idea?

MARECHAL. I never lack ideas, my dear fellow, what I lack is style. I am going to astonish you.

GIBOYER. What do you intend doing?

MARECHAL. Don't guess; you'd never hit it. Men who act as they think are rare; I am such a man—I am square; what I think, I say; and what I say, I do.

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] It's astonishing how smart I am, when it is not for myself. [*Enter Fernande.*]

MARECHAL. My daughter, let me introduce to you M. de Boyergi, Maximilien's uncle,—do you know what he has just told me? That his nephew is leaving for America.

FERNANDE. Leaving? He hadn't told me.

GIBOYER. He made up his mind this morning, Mademoiselle.

FERNANDE. Will he not come to say good-bye?

GIBOYER. He has very little time and asked me to present his respects.

FERNANDE. He doesn't think we are very friendly toward him then? Tell him, sir, that I would have been glad to shake hands with him, and that I wish him all the happiness which he deserves.

MARECHAL. No happiness for him! Do you know the reason for this desperate resolution? This gentleman did not wish to tell me, but no one can conceal anything from me. The poor young man goes away in order to forget you.

FERNANDE. Forget me? [*To Giboyer.*] Rest

assured, sir, that I was not guilty of any coquetry. Chance alone brought about this sort of intimacy which I deeply regret since it caused M. Gerard to feel more than friendly toward me.

MARECHAL. That's all well and good, but the harm is done. And it grieves me. I think the world of that young man. He is a fellow of the greatest merit and he has an elevation of sentiment which is very rare.

FERNANDE. You do not think more of him than I do.

MARECHAL. He is poor, so much the better! In short, it rests with you whether he become my son-in-law. [*To Giboyer.*] You weren't expecting that, eh? [*To Fernande.*] Well, do you accept?

FERNANDE. Yes, father.

GIBOYER. Ah, thank you, Mademoiselle, I shall hasten to—

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] M. Gerard.

GIBOYER. Oh, these lovers! He wanted to go without seeing you again.

MARECHAL. [*In a low voice.*] Hush! Let me manage. [*He sits down in the armchair, Fernande stands behind him.*] Let him enter. [*Enter Maximilien.*]

GIBOYER. [*To Maximilien, who stops somewhat confused on seeing him.*] Yes, it's I.

MAXIMILIEN. [*To Marechal.*] I see, sir, that I need no longer announce my departure to you. I come to take leave of you—and of your family.

MARECHAL. My family approves your resolution the more that it knows the real reason for it.

MAXIMILIEN. [*To Giboyer.*] What does this mean?

GIBOYER. [*Joyously.*] I confessed everything.

MAXIMILIEN. By what right did you reveal my secret?

MARECHAL. It isn't his fault; I wormed it out of him, if I may say so. So you dare to love my daughter? Nothing bashful about you.

MAXIMILIEN. Sir—

MARECHAL. [*Arising.*] Well—I give her to you.

MAXIMILIEN. Sir, this jest—

GIBOYER. He is not jesting.

MAXIMILIEN. What, notwithstanding my poverty?

MARECHAL. Your merit is a fortune.

MAXIMILIEN. Notwithstanding my birth?

GIBOYER. [*Crushed, aside.*] I had forgotten that.

MARECHAL. What's particular about your birth?

MAXIMILIEN. Didn't you know? I bear only my mother's name.

MARECHAL. What? How's that? Father unknown! [*To Giboyer.*] And you didn't tell me anything about it?

GIBOYER. Alas, I had forgotten it.

MARECHAL. Forgotten it, hang it! You should have thought of it. That is not an immaterial detail. If I dare prejudices, I respect them! And in the world's eyes—

GIBOYER. In the world's eyes, my nephew is an orphan and nobody will look up his birth certificate.

MARECHAL. Why, that's so. Nobody will—and besides, it's an enormous advantage to marry an orphan. The girl marries only her husband, not the whole family.

MAXIMILIEN. I beg your pardon, sir, my father lives.

GIBOYER. Never mind that! He has no claim on you since he did not recognize you.

MAXIMILIEN. If he has no claim on me before the law, he has in my heart. You hear.

MARECHAL. [*To Giboyer.*] Who is his father? What's his name?

MAXIMILIEN. Giboyer.

MARECHAL. Giboyer? The author of the biographies, the pamphlet writer?

GIBOYER. [*Bowing his head.*] Yes.

MARECHAL. [*To Maximilien.*] But my dear fellow, you owe nothing to such a father, neither before God nor before man. You ought to be too glad that he did not saddle you with his name.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Warmly.*] That is why he did not recognize me, not to avoid his duties as a father. He fulfilled them all with superhuman abnegation. He sacrificed his soul and body for me. Let the world judge him as it pleases, I shall not disown him.

GIBOYER. [*In a tremulous voice.*] If he heard you, he would feel well rewarded! But let him achieve his task! Since he devoted his life to making yours easier, do not cause him this sorrow, the only one he had not foreseen, of becoming himself an obstacle to your happiness; no do not refuse him the bitter joy of this last sacrifice. [*To Marechal, with a firm voice.*] I promise you in his name that he will disappear, he will go far away.

MAXIMILIEN. Where he goes, I shall go: it is my duty and my pleasure. I shall not separate him from the only man who can surround his old age with respect, and kneel by the side of his deathbed.

MARECHAL. These sentiments do you honor; but they are absurd, isn't that so, M. de Boyergi?

GIBOYER. Yes.

MARECHAL. You are in tears? Do you think that I am not moved? I am! I appreciate the good M. Giboyer, and would willingly shake hands with him, —out of sight, but hang it, I can't make a companion of him. Don't ask me to do what's impossible.

MAXIMILIEN. I am not asking for anything, sir.

MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] That's often the way to obtain everything, I have been there. [*Aloud.*] I declare to you that I shall make no further concessions. Choose between your father, since you have a father, and—my daughter.

MAXIMILIEN. I haven't even the right to hesitate.

GIBOYER. I beseech you, do not worry about him. You do not know these wild, self-sufficient devotions. The sweetest companion you may give to his old age is the thought that you are happy.

MAXIMILIEN. The more he would forgive my ungratefulness, the less I would forget it myself!—No.

GIBOYER. That's all, then.

MARECHAL. [*Angrily.*] That's all. Go to America, and much good may it do you! You do not love my daughter, that's all.

MAXIMILIEN. [*Letting himself fall into the arm-chair with a sob.*] I do not love her!

MARECHAL. [*From the threshold.*] Come Fernande. [*Fernande, who has followed the scene from the back of the stage, advances toward Maximilien, and, taking his head in her hands, kisses him on the forehead. Then she straightens up and looks at her father.*] Are you mad? A fine fix I am in now! You win, sir, you are master of the situation; all that's left for you to do is to bring M. Giboyer to my house and give him one of my dressing gowns.

FERNANDE. [*To Giboyer.*] I would be glad, sir, to have you call me daughter.

MARECHAL. What, it is he?

FERNANDE. Hadn't you guessed it? [*She offers both hands to Giboyer, who covers them with kisses.*]

MARECHAL. But then, there is nothing changed in a situation that I was accepting before. All I ask you to do, M. de Boyergi, is not to change it.

GIBOYER. I have no desire to.

MARECHAL. [*Aside.*] I shall have two secretaries instead of one.

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] Just the same, I shall start for America after the marriage.

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] Marquis d'Auberive.

MARECHAL. Come, Marquis, and be the first to learn of the marriage of your ward.

MARQUIS. [*Looking at Gerard and Fernande.*] With M. Gerard? I object.

MARECHAL. Oh, oh, you object! And by what right? I am my daughter's father. Am I not?

MARQUIS. That's true, but do you know who this gentleman is?

FERNANDE. I love him.

MARQUIS. [*Aside.*] That settles it. [*Aloud.*] Zounds! I had grown accustomed to the idea that you would marry a relative of mine, my dear Fernande, and at my age a man does not change his habits. Young man, you are an orphan—I have no children. I shall adopt you.

MARECHAL. What's that?

GIBOYER. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Marquis.

MAXIMILIEN. I also thank you; but I am not accustomed to having many fathers; I have found a good one, and I shall keep him.

MARQUIS. Take care, this is magnanimity at the expense of Fernande.

FERNANDE. That kind of nobility is good enough for me.

MARQUIS. [*To Marechal.*] It seems to me that they might ask you what you think about it.

MARECHAL. That would be proper, and I admit that I would be delighted if my son-in-law—why, no, no, no, I am a democrat.

GIBOYER. [*Aside.*] And he believes it.

MARQUIS. Since you have all lost your minds,
[*Aside*] I shall adopt my grandson.

[CURTAIN.]

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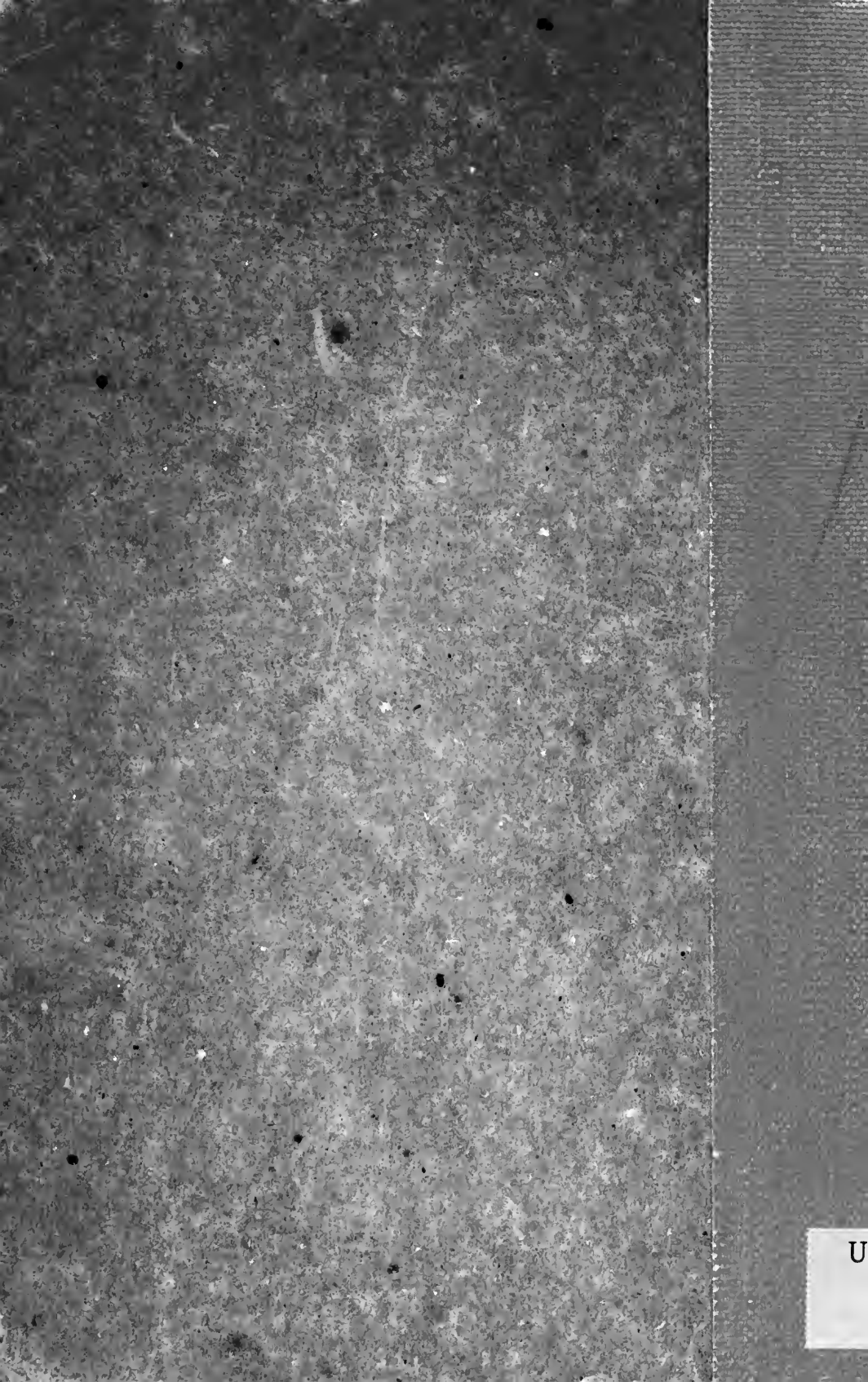
theatre thereby did not suffer defeat, though one nobly pioneering experiment in that art, and the genius of its dauntless creator, ceased with the life-work of Steele MacKaye.

The constructive experimenters in the art of aviation have already their historians; a collaboration of

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